

AFTER THE BATTLE



ANZIO

Number 52

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NUMBER 52

Edited by Winston G. Ramsey

Published by Battle of Britain Prints International Ltd.,

Church House, Church Street,
London E15 3JA, England

Telephone: 081-534 8833

Fax: 081-555 7567

Printed in Great Britain by

Plaistow Press Ltd., London E15 3JA

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After the Battle is published quarterly on the 15th of February, May, August and November.

United Kingdom Newsagent Distribution:
Seymour Press Ltd., Windsor House, 1270 London Road,
Norbury, London SW16 4DH. Telephone: 081-679 1899

United States Distribution and Subscriptions:
Bill Dean Books Ltd., P.O. Box 69, Whitestone, New
York 11357. Telephone: 1-718-359-6969

Canadian Distribution and Subscriptions:
Vanwell Publishing Ltd., 1 Northrup Crescent,
St. Catharines, Ontario, L2M 6P5.
Telephone: (416) 937 3100

Australian Distribution:
Technical Book and Magazine Company, Pty. Ltd.,
289-299 Swanston Street, Melbourne, Victoria, 3000.
Telephone: 663 3951

New Zealand Distribution:
South Pacific Books (Imports) Ltd.,
6 King Street, Grey Lynn, Auckland 2.
Telephone: 762-142

Italian Distribution:
Tuttostoria, Casella Postale 395, I-43100 Parma.
Telephone: 521 94702, Telex 532274 EDIALB I

Dutch Language Edition:
Quo Vadis, Postbus 3121, 3760 DC Soest.

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Front Cover: The last pillbox of the Anzio-Nettuno sea-front defences is eliminated in April 1976. Today it has been converted into a memorial dedicated to 'Universal Peace' by the Lions Club of Anzio-Nettuno (see page 2).

Centre pages: 'Anzio Annie', captured at Civitavecchia by American forces in June 1944 (see page 35) was shipped to the United States after the war and is now on display at the US Ordnance Museum at the Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. (D. E. Traub)

Back Cover: The poignant statue unveiled on the 35th anniversary of the landings, to the memory of Angelita of Anzio. (Jean Paul Pallud)

Acknowledgements: Massacre in Rome is based on *Death in Rome* by Robert Katz, published by the Macmillan Company, New York.

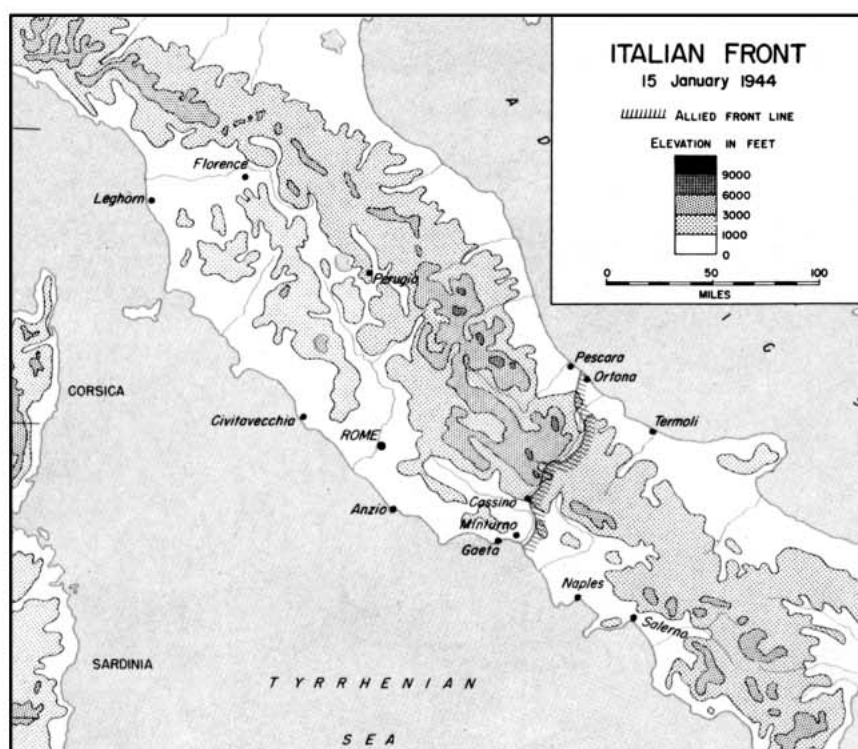
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ISSN: 0306-154X

Some four months after the Allied invasion of southern Italy in September 1943, British and American troops of the US VI Corps from Lieutenant-General Mark Clark's Fifth Army landed on January 22, 1944 and established a beachhead at Anzio, south of Rome, about seventy miles behind the German Gustav Line. This was the prelude to one of the most bitter, savage and bloody campaigns of the Second World War. Its story can only be properly understood if it is seen against the preceding four months of the Italian campaign. From September 1943 until the end of the year the US Fifth and British Eighth Armies had been making slow progress up the rugged mountainous peninsula. By the beginning of 1944 both armies came up against the strongest German defensive line in the whole of Italy — the Gustav Line — and it was clear to General Sir Harold Alexander, commanding 15th Army Group, as had been suspected months earlier, that with the limited forces at his disposal at that time there was every possibility of the campaign becoming deadlocked in the winter months ahead.

German reserves would be drawn there to allow the landing at Anzio to be made successfully. When considering the supply problem of the beachhead forces, the Allied commanders agreed to think in terms of a period of twenty-eight days, a gross underestimate as it turned out.

In view of later events, and the controversy they provoked, it might be of interest to recall how the impending operation was regarded by some of those involved. Churchill hoped that 'we were hurling a wild cat on to the shore' while Admiral Sir John Cunningham spoke of 'the lightning thrust by two or three divisions'. General Alexander's Operation Instruction of January 12, 1944 stated in perhaps more soberly fashion: 'The objects of this operation will be to cut the enemy's main communications in the Colli Laziali (Alban Hills) area south-east of Rome, and to threaten the rear of the German 14 Corps' [defending the Cassino/Garigliano sector of the Gustav Line]. General Clark's Field Order of the same date gave the aims as: '(a) To seize and secure a beachhead in the vicinity of Anzio; (b) Advance on Colli Laziali . . .'

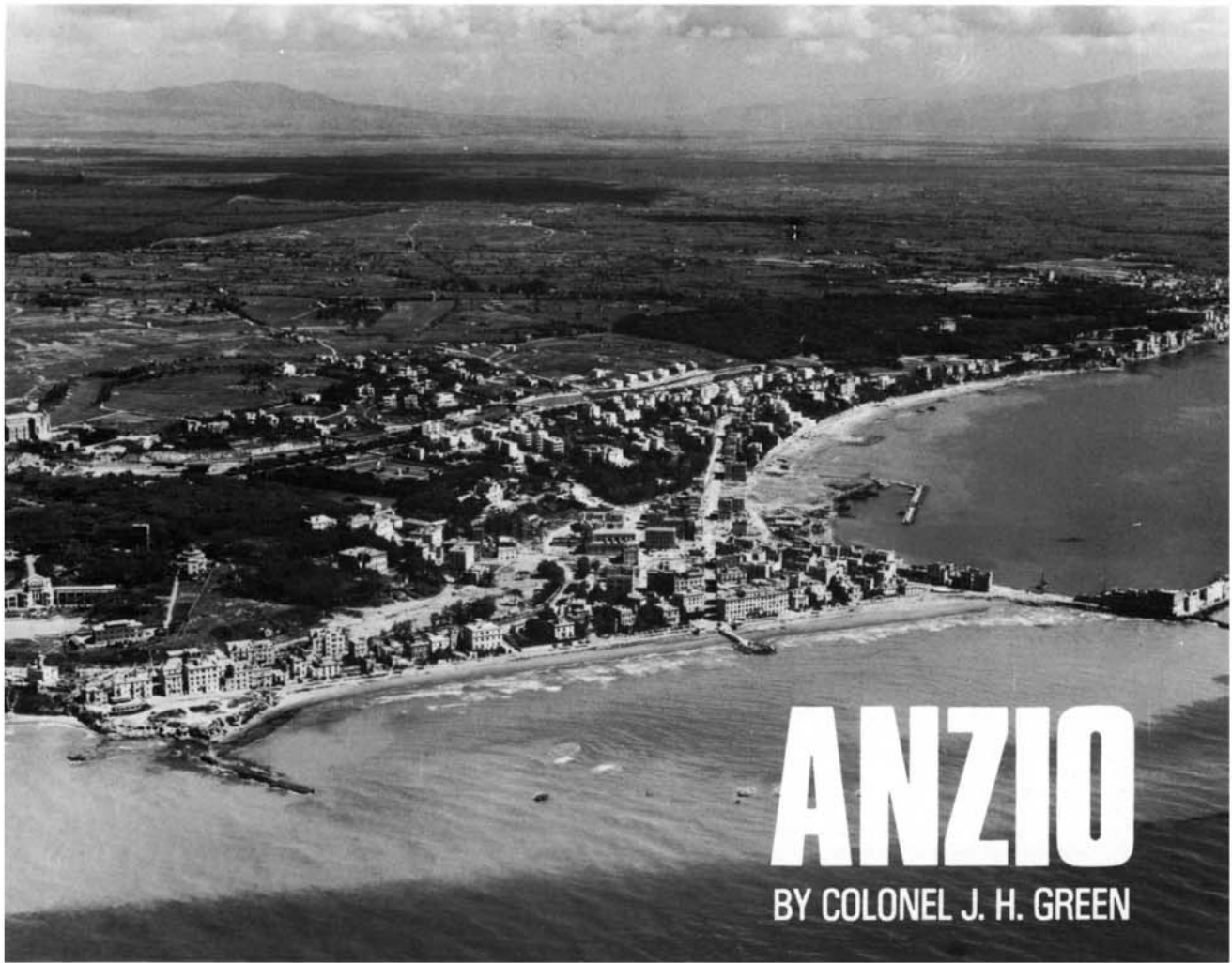


Indeed, from the very start of the Italian campaign, Allied staffs had been examining plans for possible landings on the west coast of the peninsula, in the Gulf of Gaeta, at Anzio south of Rome and Civitavecchia north of the capital. Anzio became the favoured site; a plan for a landing by one division was considered and, in the light of later events, wisely discarded. At Carthage in Tunisia, on Christmas Day 1943, the Allied Commanders-in-Chief agreed that an amphibious landing behind the German main line by not less than two divisions was necessary if the imminent deadlock was to be broken and the Allied advance up the peninsula given a new impetus. The timing was to be about January 20.

The proposed Anzio landing was to be carried out a few days after the beginning of a Fifth Army offensive (later to become known as the First Battle of Cassino) against that part of the Gustav Line between the Cassino Mountains and the Gulf of Gaeta. Thereafter, the Cassino front and the Anzio beachhead became interlocked, each in turn having a direct influence on the other. It was hoped that the strength of the Fifth Army offensive would be such that most of the available

Compared with Alexander, Clark seemed ambiguous. (b) was vague; was VI Corps to advance towards the Colli Laziali or as far as them? It was made clear to Major-General J. P. Lucas, commanding US VI Corps, that his primary objective was to secure, consolidate and hold a beachhead and only then to advance on Colli Laziali with the intention of cutting the German line of communications. It was felt by Fifth Army that he could not do both simultaneously. Lucas, in his Field Order of January 15, introduced a greater degree of ambiguity. VI Corps 'would seize and secure [the] beachhead and advance [in the] direction of Colli Laziali.'

While Clark fully supported an amphibious landing at Anzio, he and Lucas, mindful of the near disaster at Salerno only four months earlier, seemed more cautious and perhaps less optimistic than Headquarters 15th Army Group. It is doubtful if Clark shared the extraordinary optimism of his army Intelligence staff. In retrospect, there can hardly have been a better example of wishful thinking than their final summary issued on January 16: 'Within the last few days there have been increasing indications that enemy



strength on the Fifth Army front is ebbing, due to casualties, exhaustion and possibly lowering of morale. . . . From this it can be deduced that he has no fresh reserves and very few tired ones. In view of the weakening of enemy strength . . . it would appear doubtful if the enemy can hold the organised defensive line through Cassino against a coordinated army attack. Since this attack is to be launched before Shingle [the Anzio landing] it is considered likely that this additional threat [i.e. Anzio] will cause him to withdraw from his defensive position once he has appreciated the magnitude of that operation.'

The more optimistically minded among the Allied commanders seemed to think, firstly, that Fifth Army's offensive would attract German reserves from the Rome/Anzio area and allow a successful landing and, secondly, that the Anzio beachhead would so threaten the rear of the German XIV Corps that they would be forced to withdraw or at least withdraw sufficient troops to contain the beachhead forces and, in so doing, weaken the Gustav Line defences to such an extent that Fifth Army would be able to break through and advance to join up with VI Corps at Anzio. The first of these suppositions proved a more or less accurate forecast. The second, because it failed to take into consideration the role of the German Fourteenth Armee (AOK 14) in central and northern Italy, did not.

The more pessimistically minded, who probably included Clark and certainly Lucas of VI Corps, felt that, as soon as the German High Command realised the danger in which their Tenth Army (AOK 10) would be placed by any Allied advance from Anzio to the Colli Laziali, they would react violently and call on all available resources both in Italy and beyond.

Above: The view north-east from Anzio with its sheltered harbour in the right foreground across the flat coastal plain to the Alban Hills: Colli Laziali in the left background. Nettuno lies on the extreme right of the photo which was taken by Captain J. C. Hatlem in September 1944. (US Army) Below: Anzio in 1985 — now a popular holiday resort just thirty miles from Rome.



The differing views of the optimists and the pessimists were possibly due to two factors. The former pinned greater faith in the power of the Allied air forces to prevent or severely limit German reinforcements reaching Anzio

and at the same time underestimated the strength of the Gustav Line, though it had long been regarded as the strongest natural defensive line in Italy and probably one of the strongest in Europe.



The Beachhead Area

Although the beaches north and south of Anzio had the disadvantages of very gentle slopes into the sea (the gradient north of Anzio was 1:110), sandbars lying offshore and soft sand dunes on shore, the place enjoyed three main advantages. It was well within fighter aircraft cover from the Naples area; it was only about twenty miles from the Colli Laziali and only about seventy miles from the main Fifth Army front on the Gustav Line, near enough for rapid link-up once the latter had been breached.

Anzio itself is situated in a coastal plain, rarely more than fifteen miles wide, which runs from south-east to north-west from the Gulf of Gaeta to well beyond the Tiber river. Running in the same direction, edging the landward side of the plain, are the Aurunci and Lepini mountain ranges, the latter separated by the 'Velletri Gap' from the Colli Laziali stretching to within ten miles of the south-eastern outskirts of Rome. The two main roads from the Cassino/Garigliano sector of the Gustav Line to Rome were Route 7 (Via Appia) which ran along the coastal plain and Route 6 (Via Casilina) which followed the Liri and Sacco river valleys to the east of the Aurunci and Lepini Mountains and the Colli Laziali. The Velletri Gap led directly from Velletri on Route 7 to Valmontone on

Route 6, a distance of about ten miles. Two main roads led out of Anzio, the Via Anziata northwards to Carroceto and Osteriaccia and

thence to Route 7 and the other through Nettuno in a north-easterly direction to Le Ferriere and Cisterna on Route 7. There were numerous other unmetalled roads and tracks crossing the plain connecting farms and farm settlements.

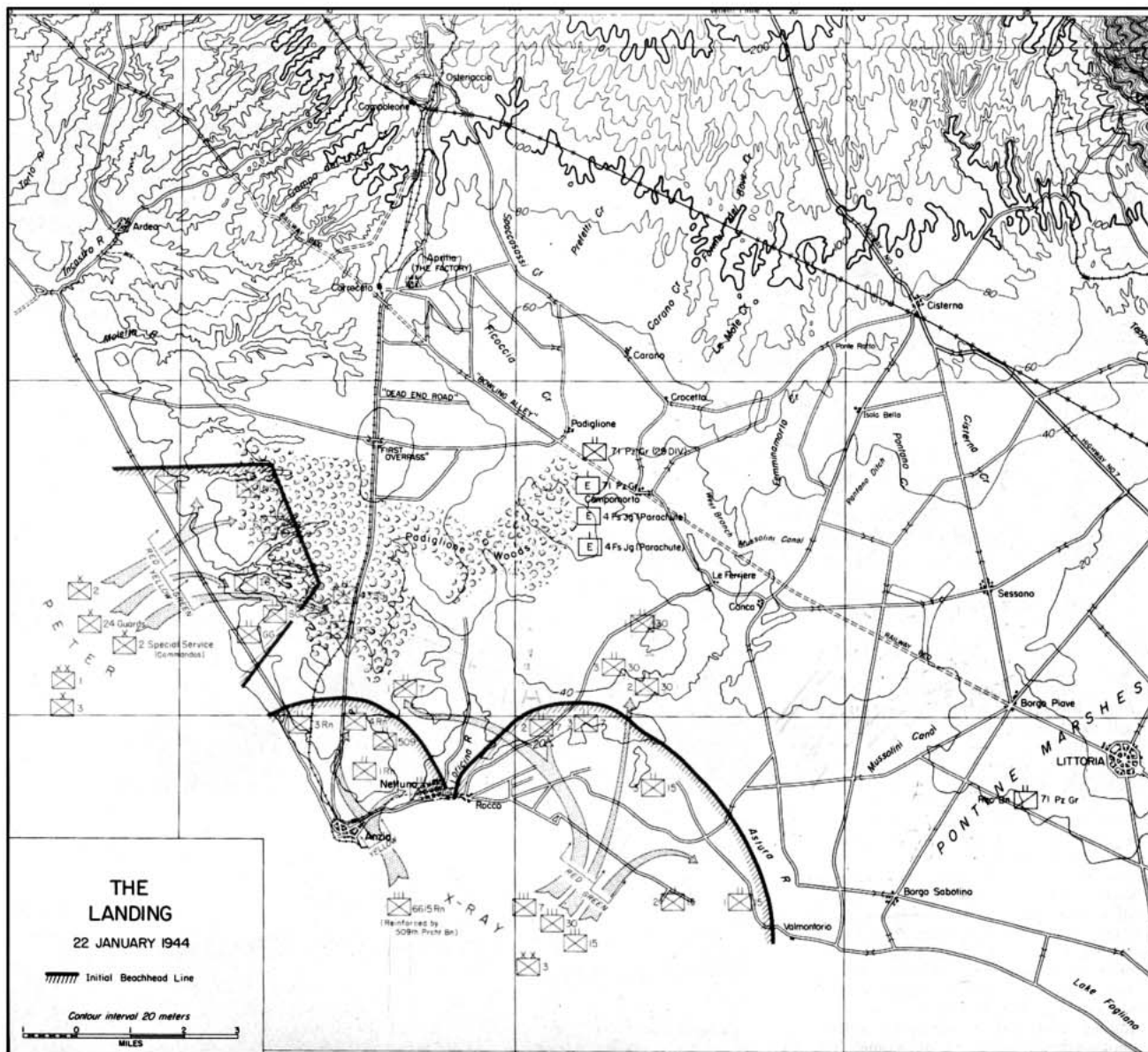
Most of the area of the proposed beachhead was part of a large reclamation and resettlement project, where the swampy and malarial Pontine Marshes had been converted into a cultivated region. Drainage ditches and irrigation channels abounded, the largest of which, the Mussolini Canal, some 170 feet wide, was to form the eastern and north-eastern perimeter of the beachhead. North of Anzio, the pines and cork-oaks of the Bosco di Padiglione (Padiglione Wood) extended some six or seven miles inland on both sides of the Via Anziata. Beyond the wood, to the north and west, the country was undulating grassland. It seemed innocent enough but, just north of the east-west road from Padiglione to San Lorenzo (the 'Lateral Road' as it was termed within the beachhead) and west of the Via Anziata, the land was fissured by a labyrinth of deep wadis and gullies. Some of them were as much as fifty feet deep and nearly all were narrow and had precipitous banks. In winter the bottoms of all of them were running with water. North-west of this 'wadi country', running westerly from the higher ground inland to the sea was the River Moletta, which was to form the north-westerly perimeter of the beachhead.



Although the coastline chosen for the beachhead could really be considered unfortified, several pillboxes had been constructed alongside the coastal road. The one above, the largest in the locality, stood just in front of the church at Nettuno.



Centre: We were fortunate to be in Anzio on April 21, 1976 to record the conversion of the last pillbox in the area (see front cover) into this striking memorial by the sculptor Amerigo Tot at the instigation of the Lyons Club of Anzio-Nettuno.



The Landings

January 22-29

The final plans for Operation 'Shingle' were approved on January 12. The difficulties over assault shipping (much of which was required for the Normandy landings) had been resolved by Churchill and Roosevelt. D-Day was set for January 22 with H-Hour 0200.

The US VI Corps at the start of the operation would comprise the following:

US 3rd Infantry Division (Major-General L. K. Truscott) comprising 7th, 15th and 30th Infantry Regiments
504th Parachute Infantry Regiment
509th Parachute Infantry Battalion
1st, 3rd and 4th Ranger Infantry Battalions
751st Tank Battalion

US 1st Armored Division (Major-General E. N. Harmon) comprising 1st Armored Regiment and 6th Armored Infantry Regiment

British 1st Infantry Division (Major-General W. R. C. Penney) comprising 2nd and 3rd Infantry and 24th Guards Brigades, 46th Royal Tank Regiment

2nd Special Service Brigade composed of the 9th and 43rd Royal Marine Commandos

All told, a force equivalent to four divisions.

The plan for the assault landing, which was expected to be strongly opposed, was as follows:

- 7th, 15th and 30th Infantry Regiments of US 3rd Division (to be followed up by 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment) were to make their assault on 'X-Ray', or 'X', beach, some four miles east of Anzio.
- The three Ranger battalions (followed up by 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion) were to land at 'Yellow' beach, immediately east of Anzio harbour.
- British 2nd Brigade Group (followed up by 2nd Special Service Brigade) would make their assault on 'Peter' beach, six miles north-west of Anzio.

The naval force for the assault formations was to be divided into two groups, Force 'X' (American) and Force 'P' (British). The former, commanded by Rear-Admiral F. J. Lowry, USN (who was also overall naval commander), included 154 landing ships and craft protected by 16 major warships (2 of which were cruisers) and 57 minor warships and other vessels. Rear-Admiral T. H. Troubridge, RN, commanded Force 'P', which comprised 87 landing ships and craft, 14 major warships (including 2 cruisers) and 46 minor warships and other vessels. One British cruiser and two destroyers were earmarked for a diversionary bombardment of

Civitavecchia in the early hours of January 22.

Detailed plans in support of Operation 'Shingle' had of course been drawn up for the Allied air forces. The latter had available some 2,700 aircraft, while it was estimated that the Germans would have at their disposal in Italy on January 22 about 260 aircraft, of which about 150 would be serviceable. By January 22, this figure would rise to just under 400, of which about 230 would be serviceable. Allied air strength was, therefore, overwhelming. Prior to the landing, the Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force (MATAF), in conjunction with the Strategic Air Force (MASAF) and Tactical Bomber Force (MATBF), would bomb airfields to neutralise and destroy the Luftwaffe in central Italy and would seek to disrupt road and rail communications to prevent the Germans moving land forces to the Anzio area. In addition to these tasks which were to continue throughout the Anzio operation, MATAF would provide fighter protection on D minus 1 for the Allied assault convoys at sea and, during the assault, for shipping lying off the beaches and in convoy to and from Naples. Thereafter, besides providing direct support for the assault forces, every effort was to be made to prevent German forces moving from central and northern Italy into the Anzio area and to interfere as much as possible with any movement of German formations and units on the Gustav Line front.



The supply problems of the Anzio operation had exercised Allied Headquarters administrative staff for some time. The possibility of bad weather at sea and shallow water off the beaches added to the difficulties and it was essential to capture the port of Anzio and have it in working order as early as possible. Until proper port facilities became available, it was decided that the landing forces would be virtually self-contained and independent for a short period of time. On January 22, therefore, a convoy of 18 LSTs (Landing Ship Tank), 3 LCTs (Landing Craft Tank) and 4 cargo ships, carrying over 19,000 tons of supplies and stores and 700 trucks and 100 DUKWs (2½-ton amphibious trucks), all fully loaded, would arrive off Anzio from Naples. Similar convoys were to arrive at the beachhead every three days, carrying pre-loaded trucks (container fashion) which would drive directly to the dumps, unload and return on the ships to Naples.

As D-Day approached and the final preparations were being made, the Allied air forces, in accordance with the tasks assigned them, had been attacking German airfields and rail communications in Italy. By January 21, the MASAF and MATBF, supported by the light and fighter bombers of the US XII Air Support Command and the Desert Air Force of the RAF, had dropped over 4,000 tons of bombs on rail targets and some 1,900 tons on German airfields.

As far as the assault forces were concerned, preparations were complete by January 20 and from 5 p.m. onwards the force put to sea from Naples, the smaller ports in the Bay and from Salerno. In order to avoid German minefields and to mislead German agents and reconnaissance aircraft, the assault convoy of more than 250 ships headed south around the Isle of Capri. Thereafter it sailed west of Ischia and the Pontine Islands. The voyage was made in perfect weather. With the cruisers and destroyers guarding the flanks and the minesweepers ahead, the men aboard the assault ships passed the time sleeping,



Unopposed landing. This is the Red and Green sectors of 'X-Ray' beach where the US 3rd Infantry Division came ashore on the morning of January 22. Today it is wild and windswept bordering an Italian military training area. (US Army)





Having achieved complete surprise, by 4 a.m. DUKWs were shuttling troops ashore as engineers bulldozed exits through the dunes and cleared scattered minefields. After daylight the Germans retaliated with sporadic shelling from inland batteries and the Luftwaffe mounted three hit-and-run raids on the

beach. Two ships were lost: one from bombing and another which hit a mine, sinking within three minutes with a loss of 30 dead and 11 injured. Tank reserves arrived at 6.45 a.m. with another 24 LCI(L)s carrying infantry half an hour later. Ashore engineers began matting the rutted surface. (US Army)

checking equipment and arms, playing cards, reading and indulging in any other activity which would allay any anxieties they may have felt about what lay ahead. As darkness enveloped the convoy's movements, course was altered and the ships swung sharply in towards Anzio. A few minutes after midnight on January 21/22, they hove to, dropped anchor and rode easily on a dead calm sea. Ashore, there was nothing to be seen or heard. Not long afterwards, the men clambered into their assault landing craft and the first wave headed towards the beaches. In the interests of surprise, there was no preliminary or supporting gunfire from the escorting warships, but at 1.50 a.m., ten minutes before H-Hour and during the last few minutes of the assault crafts' run-in when the noise of engines would have given the game away, one British rocket launching craft off each beach fired a bombardment of 785 5-inch rockets at pre-selected targets ashore. For a short while the noise was deafening. There were no bursts of answering fire and when the rocket craft ceased firing, the dark shore ahead remained silent. Moments later, at 2 a.m. precisely, the first wave of assault craft hit the beaches and the men swarmed ashore. As they dashed for the cover of the dunes or other shelter beyond, they realised that there was no enemy waiting for them. General Lucas on the USS *Biscayne* some three miles offshore and the men in the second wave already approaching the beaches were astonished to hear no machine gun or any other fire on the beaches. The Germans had been taken unawares. The Allies had achieved a complete tactical surprise.

There were, in fact, no German units in the immediate vicinity of Anzio and Nettuno in the early hours of January 22. Although the German Commander-in-Chief South-West, Generalfeldmarschall Albert Kesselring, and the German High Command (OKW) always expected that the Allies would mount further amphibious operations on the Italian coasts, they had received no Intelligence about the Anzio landing beforehand. In spite of the assembly of the landing forces in the Naples area and large concourse of shipping in the Bay, German agents in the city had reported

nothing. German reconnaissance aircraft on patrol during the nights of January 18/19 and 20/21 had failed to return to base and on the night of January 21/22, when the Allied armada was at sea, the area had not been patrolled. The first news of the landing seems to have reached a German Headquarters in Rome and then Kesselring in an unlikely manner — it appears that a German railway engineer corporal, stationed in Anzio, dashed off on a motor-cycle to give the alarm; he found no German unit and nobody else until he reached Albano where he was able to pass his unwelcome news to a Leutnant Heuritsch (who was only passing through to join his unit at Sezze) who, in turn, informed the German Town Major.

In the early hours of January 22, German troops immediately available to oppose US VI

Corps amounted only to about ten battalions, many not at full strength. North of the Tiber and at least thirty miles away was the 90th Panzergrenadier-Division's Battle Group von Behr, consisting of the 1st and 2nd Battalions of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 200 and the 1st Battalion of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 361. Inland and further away was the 4th Parachute Division's Battle Group Gericke of three battalions, one each from Parachute-Regiments 10, 11 and 12. More or less on the coastal plain, stretched between the Colli Laziali and the Gulf of Gaeta was the 29th Panzergrenadier-Division's Battle Group Ziegler, comprising the 2nd Battalion (at Velletri about twenty miles from Anzio) from Panzergrenadier-Regiment 71, a company of divisional engineers south of Velletri, Reconnaissance-Battalion 129 at Terracina,



With Anzio and Nettuno in the right background, this is the view from the edge of the training area, closed to visitors.



about forty miles away, and two engineer companies from the 4th Parachute-Division. Lastly, in the Colli Laziali area there were the reinforcement-holding units and other miscellaneous units of the 'Hermann Göring' Panzer-Division, perhaps thirty miles from the beachhead.

The bulk of the 29th and 90th Panzer-grenadier-Divisions and parts of the 'Hermann Göring' Panzer-Division had, a few

'Yellow' beach, overlooked by seafront villas, lay just to the right of the harbour at Anzio. Here the Rangers quickly scrambled up the bluff and spread out into the town itself. This is another picture from the series taken by Captain Hatlem at the end of the war covering battlefields throughout Europe. Unfortunately, in spite of three visits to Anzio, it proved well-nigh impossible to cut through the red tape surrounding aerial photography in Italy today to take comparisons. (US Army)

days earlier, been moved from the Rome area to the Garigliano front to reinforce the 94th Infanterie-Division in an effort to eliminate

the British X Corps' bridgehead of the Fifth Army's offensive. This, of course, was exactly what Allied planners had hoped to achieve.



The shallow water off the landing beaches made the use of DUKWs vital in the early stages. Here essential supplies —



steak and kidney puddings — are taken ashore on 'Yellow' beach. Note censored markings on this original print. (IWM)



With the only immediate resistance coming from small, coastal artillery and anti-aircraft detachments and scattered and uncoordinated groups of bewildered Germans, who had not been warned of an imminent Allied landing, the American and British troops quickly established themselves on shore and pushed rapidly inland. From 'X-Ray' beach east of Nettuno, the 15th, 30th and 7th Infantry Regiments, brushing aside a few surprised German patrols, soon established themselves on the initial phase line. The 30th Infantry Regiment then advanced northwards towards Le Ferriere and Conca and by dusk had secured the crossings over the west branch of the Mussolini Canal. Four bridges over the main canal — the right flank of the beachhead — were seized and prepared for demolition by patrols of the 3rd Reconnaissance Troop. The three Ranger battalions landed on 'Yellow' beach and were soon in possession of Anzio port, where the only damage was a gap in the mole. Debris was quickly cleared from around the harbour by the 36th Engineer Combat Regiment, while naval personnel swept it and removed some small sunken vessels. By early afternoon, the port of Anzio was ready to handle LSTs and other craft. Following the Rangers, 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion advanced eastwards and captured Nettuno by 10 a.m. Behind them came the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

The Riviera di Levante at the point where Anzio meets Nettuno. German shellfire was only of nuisance value at the beginning and, apart from those killed on the LSI, Allied casualties for D-Day were 13 killed, 97 wounded and 44 captured or missing.



Our early morning comparison taken in 1976 shows the twin-domed Paradiso sul Mare built as a casino in the 1920s.



On 'Peter' beach, the British 1st Infantry Division had encountered no trouble. The 1st Battalion The Loyal Regiment, the 2nd Battalion The North Staffordshire Regiment, and the 6th Battalion The Gordon Highlanders of the 2nd Infantry Brigade were all ashore by 2.45 a.m. The 2nd Special Service Brigade followed and the 24th Guards Brigade, comprising the 5th Battalion The Grenadier Guards, 1st Battalion The Scots Guards and 1st Battalion The Irish Guards, was ashore before noon. By dusk, the Loyals on the extreme left had advanced up to the Fosso del Diavolo and the North Staffordshires had occupied the western end of the Campo di Carno ridge, north of the Bosco di Padiglione, with the Gordons a little to their right rear. Some two and a half miles north of Anzio, the 2nd Special Service Brigade was astride the Via Anziate and in touch with the American Rangers on their right. Patrols of the 1st Reconnaissance Regiment (of British 1st Division) penetrated to the Fosso della Moletta, about two miles beyond the Loyals, and saw very few of the enemy.

Fighters of the US XII ASC flew 465 sorties over the beachhead and 165 sorties over the shipping lying offshore on this first day. From about noon onwards German fighter bombers flew about a hundred sorties in six raids,

To the north of Anzio town lay the British 'Peter' beach, assaulted by Major-General Penney's 1st Infantry Division and the Royal Marine Commandos. Undefended except for minefields, within an hour the troops were all safely ashore. (IWM)





Because the shallow water made it unsuitable for unloading the larger ships, once Anzio port was in operation, 'Peter' beach was abandoned after three days. (IWM)

attacking the shipping and unloading craft, and there was some long range shelling of the port area. The US minesweeper *Portent* was sunk by floating mines, which also damaged HMS *Palomares*.

Generals Alexander and Clark visited the beachhead during the morning and were greatly encouraged to find things going so well. Although the landing had been virtually unopposed, everybody from the corps commander downwards expected German counter-attacks at any moment, and the troops ashore were concentrating on finding the best defensive positions and digging-in, patrolling only the ground to their immediate fronts. General Lucas was almost solely concerned at this time with the build-up of the beachhead and the defence of its perimeter. There were no deep reconnaissances to seek out the missing enemy.

However, all in all, January 22 had been a highly satisfactory day for the US VI Corps and for Fifth Army. By midnight, some 36,000 men, over 3,000 vehicles and large quantities of supplies, representing about ninety per cent of the personnel and equipment of the assault convoy, had been brought ashore. Casualties had been amazingly light — 13 killed, 97 wounded and 44 missing. VI Corps had taken 227 prisoners.

In the meantime, Generalfeldmarschall Kesselring had taken immediate and speedy countermeasures. His first priority was to organise those units in the area which could be immediately collected to oppose the landing and to improvise a temporary tactical headquarters to take charge. His second priority, in accordance with plans already drawn up to meet this kind of emergency, was to move to the Anzio area as large a force as could be spared from the Gustav Line front and from other parts of Italy.

Accordingly, General Ernst Schlemmer, commanding the rear echelons of I Parachute-Corps at Grottaferrata and the handful of troops west of Rome, was put in charge immediately. General Max von Pohl, commanding the anti-aircraft defences of Rome, was ordered to surround the Allied beachhead with a screen of his AA guns deployed in an anti-tank role — a tactic often used in the past with the triple-purpose 88mm gun. At 5 a.m. Kesselring's Army Group C Headquarters alerted 4th Parachute-Division's Battle Group Gericke of three battalions and the two reinforcement-holding units of the 'Hermann Göring' Panzer-Division in the Colli Laziali area to block all roads leading from Anzio. At 6 a.m. (and in more detail at 12.45 p.m.)

Kesselring reported the landing to OKW, who without delay activated plan 'Marder', which provided for the reinforcement of Italy in the event of large Allied amphibious operations, by ordering the Commander-in-Chief Replacement Army in Germany to send to Italy: Headquarters LXXV Corps; Grenadier-Regiments 1026, 1027 and 1028; an artillery regiment; and a battery of Nebelwerfer. In addition, Headquarters Commander-in-Chief-West (OB West) was ordered to send to Italy the 715th Infanterie-Division, located in southern France, and the 1st Battalion of Panzer-Regiment 4 (equipped with Panther tanks). The 114th Jäger-Division was also ordered to move from Yugoslavia.

At 8.30 a.m. Kesselring telephoned General Heinrich von Vietinghoff of AOK 10 to recall General Alfred Schlemmer and Headquarters I Parachute-Corps from the Garigliano and at 5.30 p.m. the same day the

latter arrived at Grottaferrata and took over from General Ernst Schlemmer. The 3rd Panzergrenadier-Division (less one regiment) and the 71st Infanterie-Division (less Grenadier-Regiment 211 and two battalions of Grenadier-Regiment 191) and parts of the 'Hermann Göring' Panzer-Division also began moving from AOK 10 to Anzio during January 22. Late that same day, 26th Panzer-Division and parts of 1st Parachute-Division were pulled out from the Adriatic front preparatory to moving to Anzio. The Germans had reacted with characteristic vigour and efficiency.

The Luftwaffe was instructed to make available two groups of He 111 and Ju 88 torpedo bombers in southern France and Air Command South-East to send some Ju 88 bombers, to be based in northern Italy.

Shortly after 7.10 a.m. Kesselring instructed his Headquarters AOK 14 in northern Italy to make forces available against the beachhead. As a result the 65th Infanterie-Division (less one regiment) at Genoa, the 362nd Infanterie-Division (less one regiment) at Rimini, and elements of the 16th SS Panzergrenadier-Division at Leghorn were ordered to proceed immediately to Anzio and by that evening had begun to do so.

While these countermeasures, which would of necessity take some days to materialise, were being organised, brilliant improvisation nearer Anzio was very quickly converting a hotch-potch of units and sub-units, arriving from different formations at different times, into some sort of organised line of defence in an effort to seal off and contain any expansion of the beachhead. By the evening of D-Day, the 'Hermann Göring' Panzer-Division, with its headquarters already established at Cisterna, had its two reinforcement-holding battalions and some miscellaneous divisional units to the north of the west branch of the Mussolini Canal and east of the main canal. The 3rd Battalion of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 29 of the 3rd Panzergrenadier-Division was positioned astride the Via Anziata south of Campoleone and Osteriaccia. Battle Group Gericke of the 4th Parachute-Division had its one battalion from Parachute-Regiment 11 along the line of the Fosso Incastro, some two miles north of the River Moletta.



Here some of the 227 Germans taken prisoner on the first day await their turn to board the ships returning to Naples. (IWM)



Above: The early capture of a port is normally the aim of all military planners conducting amphibious landings. Although small, the harbour at Anzio was in operation on the afternoon of D-Day after engineers from the 36th Combat Regiment

under Colonel T. H. Stanley had cleared the debris created from the pre-invasion bombardment. (US Army) *Below:* Thirty years later we found Anzio almost completely rebuilt, with fishing vessels moored alongside luxurious yachts.





Sunken vessels were cleared by the Navy — the position of this breakwater can be pinpointed on the aerial picture on page 6.



It was virtually unchanged when the Editor stood in for the long-departed seaman. (IWM)

At 2.30 p.m. on January 23 Kesselring ordered General Eberhard von Mackensen and his Headquarters AOK 14 to take command of the coastal area between Cecina in the north and Terracina in the south and of all German formations and units either present at, or on their way to, Anzio. HQ AOK 14 in fact opened and formally took over command at 6 p.m. on January 25.

While more reinforcements, supplies and equipment continued to pour into Anzio, the US VI Corps did little more during the period January 23-29 than consolidate its positions and slightly increase the size of its beachhead. On January 23, in the morning, the remainder of the British 1st Infantry Division was landed at Anzio and on the next day 179th Regimental Combat Team (an RCT was

roughly equivalent to a brigade) of the US 45th Division arrived. The rest of the latter and the US 1st Armored Division (less Combat Command B) were also called forward to the beachhead. Two days later, the 2nd Special Service Brigade returned to the Garigliano. On January 25, the British 'Peter' beach was closed and Anzio port and 'Yellow' beach were used instead.



Port commander was Colonel George W. Marvin of the 504th Engineer Combat Regiment. All told, Fifth Army operated Anzio for just under five months during which time it averaged



4,000 tons per day. On March 28 a record 7,828 tons of supplies were unloaded, the engineers thereby claiming that the port ranked the fourth largest in the world. (US Army)





The majority of the beachhead comprised the reclaimed land of the Pontine Marshes. Throughout Roman history several emperors and popes had made unsuccessful attempts to drain the area but when Mussolini came to power the Agro Pontino marshland still remained unhealthy, prone to frequent outbreaks of malaria. In 1928 the Fascist Government launched a new plan to construct a series of drainage ditches and dykes, the most important of which was named after the Duce himself: the Canale di Mussolini. As the scrub was cleared, the former wilderness was brought under the plough and five new

towns inaugurated in the area. The first Littoria (now Latina) was begun in 1932, followed by Sabaudia in 1934, Pontinis the following year, Aprilia in 1937 and Pomezia in 1939. Above: The provincial capital, Littoria, was a model town in an otherwise agrarian landscape. In the far background lies 'X-Ray' beach with the Anzio promontory on the right. The Mussolini Canal runs in the middle distance. The main road running through the town is the present-day Via Pontina (N148) — marked on beachhead maps as the 'Railway Bed' (being mainly a cinder-strewn track) or 'Bowling Alley'.

On January 24, the British 1st Division moved forward a few miles and closed up to the Moletta river. A patrol of the 5th Grenadier Guards, intending to reconnoitre towards Albano, found Aprilia, a model farm settlement — promptly dubbed 'the Factory' on account of its appearance — held by troops of the 3rd Panzergrenadier-Division. The next day, the Guards, supported by a squadron of tanks of the 46th Royal Tank Regiment, captured the place and with it 111 prisoners of the 3rd Battalion of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 29. On January 26, the Grenadier Guards and Irish Guards repulsed a German counter-attack which yielded another forty-six prisoners.

By now, at or near the beachhead, the Germans had formations and units of six divisions, while two others were either on the move or assembling not too far distant. By about January 28, the situation of AOK 14 around the beachhead was as follows:

(a) To the north, along the line of Fosso della Moletta as far as Vellelata, 65th Infanterie-Division, comprising Grenadier-Regiment 145, Battle Group Gericke, plus one battalion each from 29th Panzergrenadier-Division and 90th Panzergrenadier-Division; (b) Vellelata to two miles east of Via Anziate, 3rd Panzergrenadier-Division, consisting of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 29, two battalions of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 104; (c) East of Via Anziate to Fosso delle Mole, 71st Infanterie-Division, comprising three battalions of Grenadier-Regiment 194; (d) Fosso delle Mole to Cisterna and the sea (west of Littoria), 'Hermann Göring' Panzer-Division, with battalions from 1st Parachute-Division, 16th SS Panzergrenadier-Division, 114th Jäger-Division, 29th Panzergrenadier-Division and 356th Infanterie-Division.

On January 24, when the Grenadier Guards

were reconnoitring near Aprilia, patrols of company strength of the US 3rd Division were making little or no headway towards Cisterna. General Truscott on the next day sent the 2nd

Battalion of 15th Infantry Regiment from the Le Ferriere-Conca area on the axis Conca-Isola Bella-Cisterna and the 1st Battalion of 30th Infantry Regiment along the unmetalled



The Mussolini Canal formed a natural defence line on the right flank of the beachhead and, apart from sending individual raiding parties across, American forces remained dug in on its western bank throughout the campaign until the break-out in May. This section is just north of the Railway Bed. (US Army)



road from Campomorte towards Cisterna. In spite of support from tanks and tank destroyers of 751st and 601st Battalions, men of the 30th Regiment were halted by a company of the 'Hermann Göring' Panzer-Division entrenched around a road junction about two miles beyond the west branch of the Mussolini Canal and about half-way to Ponte Rotto. The 15th Infantry Regiment's battalion gained only one and a half miles up the Conca road before they were stopped. Further attempts by the US 3rd Division on January 26 and 27 to advance towards Cisterna could get no nearer than about three miles from the town. A diversionary attack eastwards across the main Mussolini Canal by 504th Parachute Infantry, supported by the guns of the cruiser *Brooklyn* and two destroyers, captured the villages of Sessano, Borgo Piave and Borgo Sabatini but, after a counter-attack by units of the 'Hermann Göring' Panzer-Division, the Americans withdrew, leaving behind only combat patrols.

By January 28, on the northern side of the beachhead, the 24th Guards Brigade had managed to push forward some one and a half miles north of the Factory area.

It was now a week since the landings and about 69,000 men, over 500 guns and some 230 tanks had been brought ashore. At the same time, the Germans, in spite of Allied air activity, had a force of approximately the same size ringing the beachhead or within striking distance of it. Furthermore, the port of Anzio and the entire beachhead area were well within range of German artillery, and

These troops from the 2nd Battalion, 504th Paratroop Infantry Regiment, are pictured on January 26 crossing the canal a few hundred metres south of the 'Railway Bed' bridge. Jean Paul Pallud (who revisited the beachhead for us in February 1986) did well to find the exact spot as there is no parallel road and he had to leave his car, to the irate honking of motorists (and his wife), to run along the bank. (US Army)



Eight companies of the 39th Combat Engineer Regiment occupied an eight-mile front along the canal in January, installing mines and wire before they were relieved by the 1st Special Service Force. Today some of the older locals still refer to it as the 'Canale di Mussolini' although its present-day name is Moscarello. (US Army)





The Allies responded to the German raiders by stiffening air defences and Colonel Edgar W. King of the 68th Coast Artillery Regiment (Anti aircraft) began the installation of an increasing number of 40mm and 90mm anti-aircraft guns, establishing a 12,000-yard inner artillery zone around the vital beach and port areas. This Bofors was on the Via Zanardelli. (US Army)

As the build-up continued, the Luftwaffe launched attacks with increasing ferocity against the lodgment area. 'The German Air Force put up its biggest air effort since Sicily in an attempt to cut off Allied supplies', wrote Captain John Bowditch in his historic narrative 'Anzio Beachhead' for the Department of the Army. 'Small flights of fighter-bombers strafed and bombed the beach and port areas every few hours. The most serious threat, however, was the raiding by medium bomber squadrons hastily brought back from Greece and the torpedo and glider bombers from airfields in southern France. Skimming in low at dusk from the sea through the smoke and hail of ack-ack fire, they released bombs, torpedoes, and radio-controlled glider bombs on the crowded shipping in the harbor.'



By the end of January, 97 German aircraft were claimed shot down and we searched for a considerable time for the locations of two of them, unfortunately without success due to the meagre background detail visible in these pictures. (IWM)

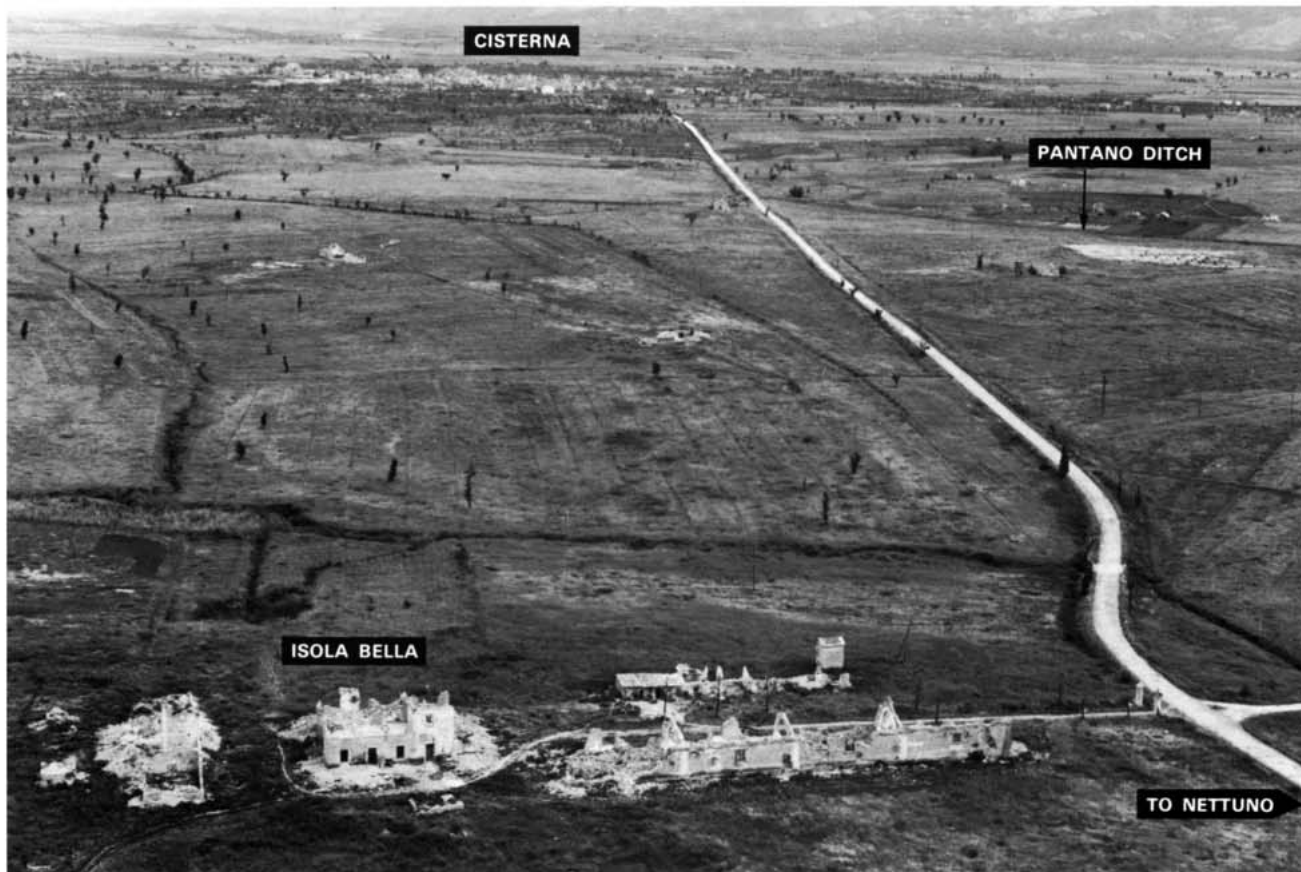
shelling, spasmodic to begin with, increased in intensity as the days passed. So did German air raids. In attacks on Allied shipping off the beachhead, although eleven German aircraft were shot down, the destroyer HMS *Janus* was sunk and HMS *Jervis* damaged on January 23. Thereupon, since they were not required by the land forces, the cruisers HMS *Penelope*, *Orion* and *Spartan* were withdrawn out of harm's way. At dusk on January 24, there were two German air attacks, the first by forty-three bombers and the second by fifty-two. Again, eleven raiders were shot down but the USS destroyer *Plunket* and a minesweeper were damaged, the hospital ship *St David* was sunk and the *Leinster*, her sister ship, was set on fire. Another US destroyer, the *Mayo*, was disabled by a mine. Bad weather intervened on the next two days, and after fruitless raids at dusk on January 26 and at dawn the next day, in which the Germans lost nine bombers, HMS *Spartan* (back from Naples) and the cargo ship *Samuel Huntington* were both sunk on January 29 with heavy loss of life.



Balloons were flown to try to stop low-level bombing. This one belonging to the 102nd Barrage Balloon Battery is tethered to the Paradiso sul Mare — now a training school for hotel staff.



Note that the statues lining the terrace were still there in 1976 (see page 7) but Jean Paul found that they were decapitated five years ago by vandals.



The Allied Offensive

January 30-February 1

Both Generals Alexander and Clark had visited the beachhead again on January 25. Two days later, Alexander, not satisfied with the state of things, suggested that it was time for an advance on Velletri on Route 7 just south of the Colli Laziali. Clark was at Anzio on January 28 and Lucas was urged to take Cisterna and Campoleone, thereby controlling the two road centres which formed good jumping-off points for Allied attacks on the Colli Laziali or German attacks on the beachhead. Lucas agreed to attack on January 30. On the German side, General von Mackensen had already drawn up a plan for an attack to eliminate the beachhead and by January 30 four large battle groups with a combined strength of thirty-three battalions, under the control of I Parachute-Corps, had assembled in readiness.

The plan of attack for US VI Corps was a two-pronged advance on the Colli Laziali. On the right, the US 3rd Division, reinforced by the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment and the three Ranger battalions, was to cut Route 7 at Cisterna and then advance on the Colli Laziali, seizing the high ground at Velletri and moving on Valmontone on Route 6. On the left, in what was to be the main thrust, the British 1st Division was to advance northwards up the Via Anziante towards the high ground around Albano and Genzano — the south-western slopes of the Colli Laziali. The US 1st Armored Division, on the left, was to advance north-west from Carroceto over difficult terrain towards the Via Laurentina and then northwards to the western slopes of the Colli Laziali. Beforehand, the US 36th Engineer Regiment were to relieve the British 2nd Infantry Brigade along the Fosso della Moletta and the 1st Reconnaissance Regiment replaced the Ranger battalions and the 3rd Battalion of 7th Infantry Regiment east of Aprilia. Part of 179th Regimental Combat

The Rangers were ambushed emerging from the Pantano Ditch and a relief column pushing up the road from Nettuno was stopped before reaching Isola Bella.

Team relieved 504th Parachute Infantry along the Mussolini Canal.

General Truscott decided on three axes of attack towards Cisterna. The 1st and 3rd Ranger Battalions were to approach the objective along the Fosso di Pantano, a half-dry irrigation channel running from the west branch of the Mussolini Canal, east of and more or less parallel to the Conca-Cisterna road, which it joined about one and a half miles south of Cisterna. The 4th Ranger Battalion and 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry were to attack up the Conca-Cisterna road, via Isola Bella, while a mile or so to the west, the 7th Infantry's advance was to be northwards on the line of the Fosso Femminamorta. Their

objective was the German-held railway line, west of Cisterna, and Route 7 north of the town. Finally, 504th Parachute Infantry, partly to protect the US 3rd Division's right flank, was to make a diversionary attack northwards along the Mussolini Canal.

At 1.30 a.m., on January 30, under a moonless, cloudy sky, the men of the 1st and 3rd Ranger Battalions, with pockets stuffed with grenades and two bandoliers of ammunition over their shoulders, slipped across the canal and, in column of battalions, crept silently forward along the narrow ditch. Some hours later, at dawn, the leading troops of the 1st Battalion were nearing the southern outskirts of Cisterna, though the rear of the 3rd Battalion was strung out more than a mile behind. As the men emerged from cover, they were caught in a hail of machine gun, rifle and mortar fire from Germans concealed in houses, haystacks and dug-in positions. The Rangers had walked into an ambush laid by the 3rd Battalion of Parachute-Regiment 1, Luftwaffe ground troops of Jäger-Battalion 7, and Reconnaissance-Battalion 129. The plight of the Rangers was reported on the radio at 7.30 a.m. by the 1st Battalion. The 4th Ranger Battalion and the 3rd Battalion of 15th Infantry, who had left their start line an hour later than the two Ranger battalions, tried to come to the aid of their ambushed colleagues but their advance up the Conca-Cisterna road was stopped by heavy fire from a group of farm buildings below Isola Bella. They sustained heavy casualties. To their left, the 7th Infantry, advancing along the Fosso Femminamorta, were also held up south of Ponte Rotto. The beleaguered Rangers fought desperately all through the morning until their ammunition was expended. Soon afterwards they were rounded up. Of the 767 men who made up the two battalions, only 6 escaped. The 'Hermann Göring' Panzer-Division claimed afterwards that its battle group took 639 prisoners.



Today the bullet-scarred pillars to the Isola Bella farm still stand.



On the right, 504th Parachute Infantry had been brought to a halt at the junction of the Mussolini Canal and the Fosso di Cisterna.

After the failures of January 30, General Truscott renewed his attacks on the afternoon of January 31, using 751st Tank Battalion, 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion and a battalion from 30th Infantry Regiment. By noon on February 1, the Americans had reached a point less than a mile from Cisterna but the advance had lost its momentum and Truscott decided to call a halt. The US 3rd Division, which had sustained over 3,000 casualties since the landing, began to dig-in behind barriers of mines, wire and anti-tank guns. The line now ran north-eastwards from Carano to within a mile of the railway line and Cisterna, thence just north of Ponte Rotto and Isola Bella to the Fosso di Cisterna.

For the main attack astride the Via Anziante, General Penney, GOC British 1st Division, decided on two phases. In the first, 24th Guards Brigade was to seize the start line, a track which joined the main road about one mile south of Campoleone station, and the 1st Battalion of the 6th Armored Infantry Regiment, with two companies of the 1st Armored Regiment, the American start line, which was a section of railway track north-west of Carroceto. In the second phase, the 3rd Infantry Brigade (1st Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, 2nd Battalion The Sherwood Foresters, 1st Battalion The Kings Shropshire Light Infantry), supported by 46th RTR and 2nd, 19th and 24th Field Regiments and 80th Medium Regiment RA, were to pass through 24th Guards Brigade, with the road and railway crossing at Campoleone station as the first objective and Osteriaccia the second.

The 1st Scots Guards and 1st Irish Guards on the left began their attack just before midnight January 29/30 and, although there was, as always in a night attack, much confusion, both battalions had reached their objectives before first light. After a company of the Scots Guards had been overrun in a German counter-attack and the survivors of two Irish Guards companies on the west of Via Anziante had been forced to withdraw a little from their very exposed positions, the whole of the start line for 3rd Infantry Brigade's attack was regained by a company of the KSLI and a squadron of 46th RTR by midday. Just over

Campoleone station — first objective for the attack on the left of the bridgehead on January 31. The advance began from a position just in front of Aprilia (in the right background) towards the camera position. The railway line runs across this picture which was taken by Captain Hatlem a year after the battle. Note that some rebuilding has already taken place. (US Army)

three hours later 3rd Brigade's attack got under way with 1st KSLI east of Via Anziante and 1st DWR west of it. 'B' Squadron of 46th RTR were in support. The two battalions fought their way steadily forward and by 6 p.m. both had captured and consolidated their objectives south of the railway line running through Campoleone station. After a very uncomfortable night because of constant shelling, the Sherwood Foresters with 'C' Squadron, 46th RTR, advanced northwards at 10.30 a.m. on January 31 and, in spite of heavy losses from machine gun and mortar fire, gained the railway line. They failed, however, to get across the railway embankment.

Although the 2nd Battalion of the US 1st Armored Regiment came up in support, the Foresters failed again in the afternoon to take the embankment.

Meanwhile the US 1st Armored Division had struggled all through January 30 to continue its advance north-westwards. Some ground was gained on the Vallelata ridge to the west of Via Anziante between the 65th Infantry-Division and 3rd Panzergrenadier-Division but the tanks were unable to take advantage of this infiltration. It soon became clear to General Lucas that little more progress was going to be made and he decided to call a halt to the offensive.



On a road to the west of the station two Shermans were knocked out just beside these farm buildings. (US Army)



1944. This picture from German archives shows the massive bulk of a Tiger I of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 508 in action just west of the station. In the background the Colli Laziali mountains with the village of Velletri in the centre.

In the British part of the beachhead, VI Corps had now created a salient four miles deep and two miles wide at the base, with the apex on the railway line just south of Campoleone. Had General Lucas intended to continue his attack to Osteriaccia and towards the Colli Laziali, such a salient would have formed a valuable jumping-off ground for the next phase. The capture of Campoleone and Cisterna to the east was still Alexander's immediate and urgent objective but Lucas ordered his corps on February 1 to go on the defensive to meet the German counter-attack which seemed imminent. Clark confirmed Lucas's orders. The British salient, therefore, became an immediate defensive problem, indeed almost a liability. Like all salients, that at Campoleone invited attack at the nose and on both flanks. Whereas the base of the salient required only two miles of front to be defended, the two flanks required eight miles and a great deal more manpower. In an effort to surmount this problem, General Penney ordered the 3rd Infantry Brigade to defend the nose of the salient with 1st KSLI to the right of Via Anziate and 1st DWR on the left, with the Sherwood Foresters about 1,000 yards in the rear. The 24th Guards Brigade, facing west, held the left flank, with the Irish Guards on the Vallelata ridge and then, south-westwards, the Scots Guards at Colle Vallelata (Point 95), the Grenadier Guards in the area of the disused railway bed north-west of Carroceto and the North Staffs (under command 24th Guards Brigade) on the Buonriposo ridge. The right flank of the salient was defended by the 2nd Infantry Brigade, with the 6th Gordon Highlanders between Via Anziate and Colle della Mandria, the 1st Reconnaissance Regiment between Aprilia (the Factory) and Torre Spaccasassi and, lastly, the 1st Loyals on the Campoleone-Carano road, next to the left of US 3rd Division.

In anticipation of an enemy offensive, reinforcements had been sent to US VI Corps by February 3 to offset the growing German build-up. The remaining two infantry regiments of the US 45th Infantry Division, the 157th and 180th, came from Fifth Army reserve, and the 1st Special Service Force and 168th Infantry Brigade of the British 56th Infantry Division had come from the Garigliano front. It is interesting to note that now it was the turn of the Allies to transfer formations from the Gustav Line to Anzio. Only ten days earlier it was the Germans. On the enemy side, Kesselring decided to transfer from the quiet Adriatic front 1st Parachute-Division to reinforce his hard-pressed XIV Corps at Cassino. Hitler also agreed that the Infanterie-Lehr-Regiment, an elite demonstration regiment, and the Tiger tanks of the

heavy tank detachment schwere Panzer-Abteilung 508 should be sent from Germany to AOK 14. It was also arranged that General Traugott Herr and the Headquarters LXXVI Panzer-Corps from the Adriatic would join von Mackensen at Anzio and take command

of the 3rd Panzergrenadier-Division, the 715th and 71st Infanterie-Divisions and the 'Hermann Göring' and 26th Panzer-Divisions, leaving Schlemm and I Parachute-Corps with the 65th Infanterie-Division and 4th Parachute-Division under command.



1945. Almost the same view taken by Captain Hatlem who must have landed nearby to picture the Shermans. Was the Tiger responsible, we wonder? (US Army)



1986. JP finds the location; unfortunately thunder clouds obscure the mountains.



Difficult background for comparison but nevertheless excellent pictures well worth including. These tanks and infantry have often been identified as belonging to the 'Hermann Göring' Panzer-Division but they may well be from a Battle

Group organised by the I Parachute-Corps with men of the 4th Parachute-Division and armour from the 3rd Panzergrenadier-Division or from the 1st Battalion of Panzer-Regiment 4. (Bundesarchiv)

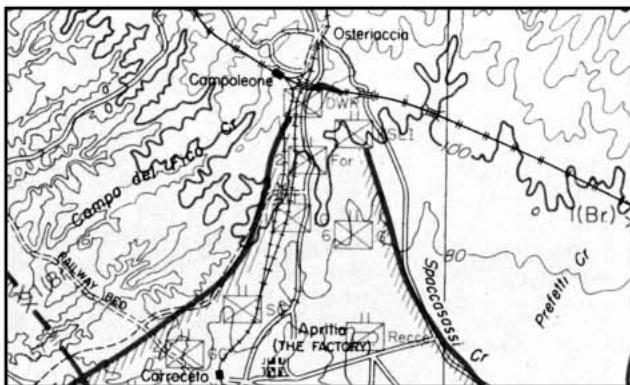
The Germans Attack

February 3-12

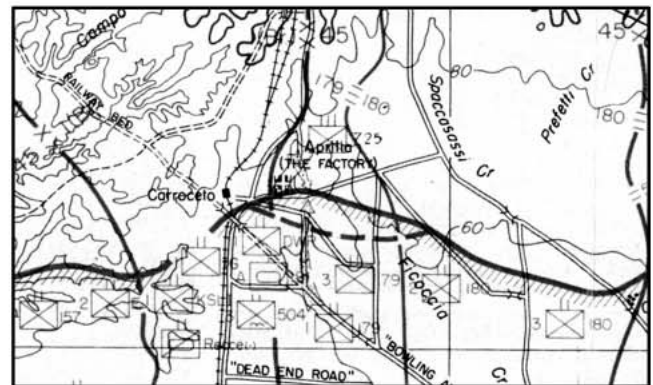
Von Mackensen's plans for the first half of February were, firstly, to eliminate the Campoleone salient and, secondly, to capture the Aprilia (Factory) area as a jumping-off place for his counter-offensive.

The attack on the salient, scheduled for the night of February 1/2, was delayed forty-eight hours by Allied bombing. Some 180 tons of bombs were dropped on roads leading to the front; ammunition supplies were unable to reach the gun positions, and the artillery communications network of the 3rd Panzergrenadier-Division was wrecked.

While the main part of schwere Panzerjäger-Abteilung 653 was fighting on the Eastern Front, the 1st Company of the detachment with a nominal strength of fourteen Elefants was sent to Italy. More than eight metres long and weighing 65 tons, the SdKfz 184 mounted the powerful 88mm PaK 43. (Bundesarchiv)



The German counter-attack completely eliminated the salient which had been pushed out to Campoleone and by February 12



the front line (dotted on the map on the right) had been pushed back three miles leaving Aprilia in German hands.

During the late afternoon of February 3 some of the DWR and KSLI positions were shelled but a small infantry attack which followed was broken up by small arms and artillery fire. This proved to be a diversion and heavy shelling well behind the positions of these two battalions at 11 p.m. heralded the main attacks, which were directed against the eastern and western shoulders of the salient. On the east side, two battalions of Panzer-grenadier-Regiment 104 made a wide sweep round the 6th Gordons and began to infiltrate their positions. After fierce and confused fighting, the Germans had by 7.30 a.m. overrun one company and were on a ridge just north of Aprilia. West of Via Anziante, three battalions of the 65th Infanterie-Division attacked the Irish Guards from the north-west, west and south-west. After daybreak, with the support of some tanks and self-propelled guns, the German infantry continued to infiltrate and reached the Campoleone-Anzio railway, running parallel to and just west of Via Anziante. The Irish Guards fought back with great determination in the drizzling rain and prevented them from cutting the road behind 3rd Infantry Brigade. Unfortunately, the poor weather, thick cloud and rain, kept Allied aircraft grounded.

The situation worsened as the morning wore on and it seemed that 3rd Infantry Brigade were in very serious danger of being cut off. At noon, the 2nd Infantry Brigade was reinforced by the 1st Battalion The London Scottish of 168th Infantry Brigade, and at 4 p.m. this battalion with two squadrons of 46th RTR made a determined and successful counter-attack to regain the ground north of Aprilia which had been lost earlier by the Gordons. The Germans suffered heavy losses and were forced to fall back. By 5 p.m. the gap between 3rd Infantry Brigade and the Gordons had been eliminated.

Although this initial enemy attack had been held, it was decided to withdraw the 3rd Infantry Brigade from their exposed positions and establish a new defensive line on the base of the former salient, in front of Carroceto and Aprilia. The KSLI and Sherwood Foresters withdrew quickly and without too much interference but the DWR, who were under direct tank fire, had to wait until darkness before they could extricate themselves and,



In come the big guns — the 280mm K5(E) railway Kanone weighing 218 tonnes. Its 21.54-metre barrel could launch a 255kg shell up to 36 miles. (Bundesarchiv)

even then, had to leave behind most of their anti-tank guns and other equipment.

Von Mackensen had achieved his objective of eliminating the Campoleone salient but he had not succeeded in isolating and destroying 3rd Infantry Brigade. However, the British 1st Infantry Division had paid a high cost. Casualties had been about 1,400. The 1st DWR had lost 260 officers and men, the Gordons 320, the London Scottish over 100, and the Irish Guards were down to a strength of only 270. The Germans claimed the capture of over 900 prisoners, but had themselves sustained heavy casualties — almost 500 killed, and over 300 taken prisoner.

There were no large-scale enemy attacks for three days but it was not a period of inactivity for VI Corps. In the full knowledge that the Germans held the initiative and would almost certainly renew their offensive in the near future, everybody busied themselves with improving and strengthening the defences in what seemed continuous, icy rain and ubiquitous mud. Every part of the beachhead was subject to shelling from German long-range guns, as well as to air attacks. Of the enemy's 372 pieces of artillery, some 150 were of calibres exceeding 105mm. There were a few railway guns of 210mm and 240mm, one of the latter at Albano.

Displaying a white flag, a group of British prisoners marching into captivity show interest in a Brummbär from Sturm-Panzer-Abteilung 216. The Panzer II on the left, although outdated as a battle tank by 1944, was still in use as a command vehicle with the staff of the sturmpanzer battalion. (Bundesarchiv)





Above: Four American vehicles and one British were destroyed in Nettuno in broad daylight on February 7 during the repeated German attacks on the landing zone. (US Army) **Right:** Jean Paul established the precise location on the corner of the Piazza Cesare Battisti.

Along the front, February 7 was a quiet day. Not so in Anzio, where the port area was bombed by Focke-Wulf 190s and Messerschmitt 109s at 8.10 a.m., 11.35 a.m. and 3.25 p.m. High-explosive and anti-personnel 'butterfly' bombs were dropped. In the harbour area, an LCI and LCT were damaged and thirty men killed and forty wounded. In an effort to gain altitude when attacked by a Spitfire, one German plane jettisoned its load of anti-personnel bombs. They fell in the area of the 95th Evacuation Hospital. Twenty-eight hospital staff and patients were killed and sixty-four were wounded, including the Commanding Officer. Anti-aircraft guns shot down seven aircraft and damaged nine others, while Allied fighters destroyed seventeen with twelve probables.



Men of the 1st Battalion of the 36th Engineers were on hand to bulldoze the wreckage aside and they soon had the traffic moving again. Although inexperienced to the rôle, three days



later the entire regiment was committed as infantry on the left flank which it held for 45 days before being relieved by the British 5th Division. (US Army)



Although the front line may have been ten miles inland it must be constantly remembered that the whole of the beachhead was within the range of German artillery and subject to constant bombing. *Above:* Now the turn of supply trucks in the Viale Menciacci in front of Anzio railway station. (IWM)

General von Mackensen began the second phase of his attack, the capture of the Aprilia-Carrocceto area, at 9 p.m. on February 7 with heavy mortar and artillery concentrations on both flanks of the British 1st Division's front. Both battalions of Grenadier-Regiment 145 (of 65th Infanterie-Division) infiltrated the positions of the North Staffs on the southern end of Buonriposo ridge and, in small groups, fought their way eastwards towards the Via Anziate, making full use of the numerous deep gullies and ditches. Part of the German regiment turned north-east along the northern end of Buonriposo ridge, held by the Grenadier Guards, who at the time were under attack from the west and north-west by two battalions of Grenadier-Regiment 147. The North Staffs were forced to withdraw from the ridge and at 4 a.m. on February 8 seventy men of their left-hand company requested permission to attach themselves to the US 157th Infantry Regiment's 3rd Battalion, which was ordered to withdraw to a new position south of the ridge. The Grenadier Guards had by now lost most of three of their companies and the remainder were withdrawn over 1,000 yards south-east, to the left of the Campoleone-Anzio railway line about 1,000 yards south of Carroceto station. It was in defence of a ditch at this position that Major W. P. Sidney (the future Lord De L'Isle) and a few of his support company showed courage and bravery of the highest order. At one point only Major Sidney and two Guardsmen, with grenades, held the Germans off. Even when a grenade exploded prematurely, killing one of the Guardsmen and wounding Major Sidney, no German succeeded in getting past. Major Sidney was awarded the Victoria Cross.

On the right, Battle Group Gräser, shortly after 10 p.m. attacked 'C' Squadron of 1st Reconnaissance Regiment and a company of the 10th Royal Berkshires near the crossroads where the Lateral Road from the Factory meets the road to Carano and by midnight on February 7/8 the two forward companies of the 1st London Irish, to the left of the Royal Berkshires and located in the Factory area, were under great pressure from Panzer-grenadier-Regiment 29. General Penney decided to strengthen this flank by sending the 6th Gordons and 238th Field Company RE, acting as infantry. At the same time two squadrons of the 1st Reconnaissance Regiment were sent to reinforce the North Staffs. At 1.30 p.m. a counter-attack by the KSLI and Sherwood Foresters, with a squadron of 46th RTR, failed to recapture Buonriposo ridge.



Air defences ringed the port. This Bofors is in the Piazza San Antonio although the damage behind was caused in this case by Allied shelling. (US Army)





On Friday, October 29, 1937 Capo del Governo Benito Mussolini inaugurated the new town of Aprilia — a ceremony taking place the following year in the completed Piazza Roma.



The town, which comprised some two dozen buildings by 1944, changed hands several times. This Tommy looks at the bronze statue of San Michele erected on the square. (IWM)

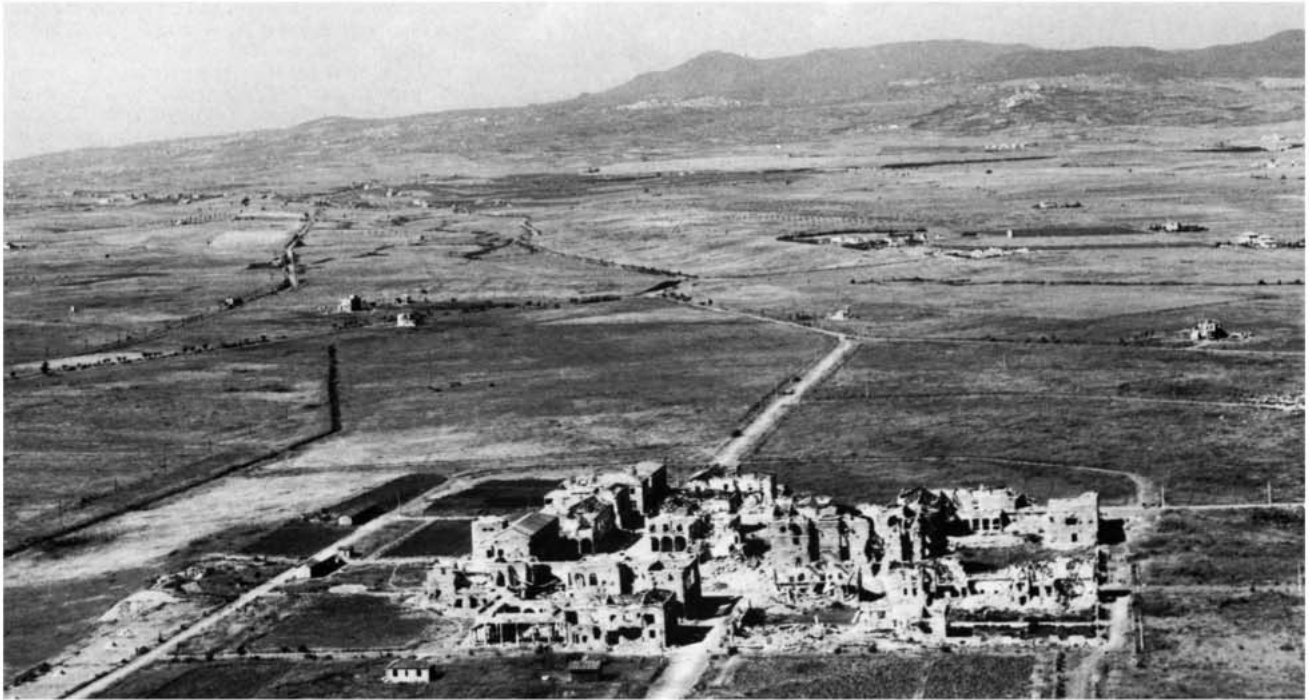
The German attack started up again at about midnight on February 8/9, this time directed against the 1st London Irish and the 10th Royal Berks of 168th Infantry Brigade. Both battalions fought with great determination against odds of about eight to one. By 9 a.m., the three battalions of Grenadier-Regiment 725 of Battle Group Gräser had advanced on the west side of the Factory between the Scots Guards and the London Irish, while the three battalions of Panzer-grenadier-Regiment 29, part of Battle Group Schönfeld, had penetrated between the London Scottish (on the right of the London Irish) and the Royal Berks. Then three battalions of Grenadier-Regiment 735, also part of Battle Group Schönfeld, mounted an attack on the Factory from the north. The 168th Infantry Brigade, against such odds, were forced to withdraw to the southern fringes of Aprilia, which two companies of Shermans of the US 3rd Tank Battalion of the 1st Armored Regiment failed to retake in a counter-attack at about midday. They found the area bristling with anti-tank guns. Prior to this, Stuart tanks of the 1st Battalion of the 1st Armored had also failed to retake Buonriposo ridge, losing seven tanks in the process. The loss of this ridge to the west and of Aprilia to the east left the Scots Guards, a company of the Irish Guards and 23rd Field Company RE occupying Carroceto railway station and ground to the north of it, if not in a salient at least forming a dangerous bulge. During the afternoon of February 9 and throughout the cold, moonlit night, the Scots Guards, Grenadier Guards and the 3rd Battalion of US 504th Parachute Regiment came under continuous attack from three sides by German tanks, battalions of 65th Infanterie-Division and Battle Group Gräser. Although the enemy was counter-attacked locally on a number of occasions, the odds, as at Aprilia, were too great, and on the morning of February 10 the Scots Guards and their attached units were forced to withdraw to the south of Carroceto station. By now, the infantry battalions of 168th Infantry Brigade, the London Irish, the London Scottish and the Royal Berkshires, were down to about forty per cent of full strength and all other battalions of the British 1st Division to approximately fifty to sixty per cent.

On February 11 and 12, the 1st Battalion of the US 179th Infantry Regiment, with two companies of tanks from 191st Tank Battalion, made three separate counter-attacks on the Factory area but only in two-company strength. This was wholly inadequate and the Germans held on to both Aprilia and Carroceto, in spite of some heavy bombing by Allied heavy and medium bombers.



Aprilia was almost totally destroyed in the battles which followed. Initial reconstruction work took four years but from 1952 onwards the town was greatly expanded to a population of 80,000. When we first visited 'the Factory' in 1976 the buildings surrounding the square had been restored to the original architectural style (*above*) but ten years later Jean Paul found a considerable change to the building behind Saint Michael (*below*).





A new town killed off in its infancy. Captain Hatlem took this shot looking north from where the German assault came. The

street running into the town from that direction is the Via Degli Aranci which leads to the square. (US Army)

At about this time, the balancing act between Anzio and Cassino took on a strange turn. It was decided on February 10 that the whole of the British 56th Infantry Division (168th Infantry Brigade was already at the beachhead) would be transferred from the Garigliano to Anzio. On the other hand, Kesselring decided that the units of the 71st Infanterie and 15th Panzergrenadier-Divisions he had at Anzio would be sent back to AOK 10 at Cassino. This did not mean that the Germans were reducing their strength at the beachhead; merely that the 114th Jäger-Division from Yugoslavia could now be fed into the line.

The Allies were fully aware that the main German effort to eliminate the beachhead was yet to come and that since the First Battle of Cassino had failed to break through the Gustav Line into the Liri valley, there was no immediate prospect of a link-up with the Anzio beachhead forces. And, furthermore, that they would have to continue to exert the maximum pressure at Cassino in an effort to dissuade Kesselring from further reinforcing Anzio from the Gustav Line. He was, of course, reinforcing AOK 14 at Anzio but from different sources. After the near-success of the First Battle of Cassino when the US II Corps came so close to capturing Monastery Hill, Alexander was about to launch the Second Battle of Cassino, to be preluded by the bombing of the Abbey on February 15.



Above: 'The Factory' today: living up to its nickname as part of the Roma-Latina industrial zone. Below: The church dedicated to San Antonio stood at the end of the Via Degli Aranci. It was outwardly undamaged when this picture was taken by Sergeant Hewitt on February 6 but the tower had been completely demolished by the time the battle was over. It was never rebuilt.





Operation 'Fischfang' – the major German offensive

February 16-20

The capture of Carroceto, the Factory and Buonriposo ridge had provided von Mackensen with the necessary jumping-off position for his all-out attack on the beachhead and called for a reorganisation of VI Corps' western perimeter. The newly arrived 56th Infantry Division took over the sector from the coast to a point south of Buonriposo ridge, about one mile west of the Via Anziante. The 36th Engineer Regiment, under command, were positioned along the Fosso della Moletta and 167th Infantry Brigade (with left to right the 9th Royal Fusiliers, 8th Royal Fusiliers and the 7th Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry) on their right. East of 167th Brigade was the US 45th Infantry Division, with the 2nd Battalion of 157th Infantry Regiment astride the Via Anziante (the other two battalions were in reserve), 179th Infantry Regiment as far as the Fosso della Ficocchia and from there to Carano 180th Infantry Regiment, whose right flank was next to the US 3rd Division's left. In reserve were the British 1st Infantry Division south of Campo di Carne, and US 1st Armored Division in the Bosco di Padiglione.

The German plan for what they hoped would be the final thrust to Anzio itself and the destruction of the beachhead was simple. It was to breach the Allied line between Buonriposo ridge and the Fosso di Spaccasassi and then advance towards Nettuno with infantry, motorised and armoured troops. The initial break-in was to be effected by the 3rd Panzergrenadier-Division, with Infanterie-Lehr-Regiment under command, 715th Infanterie and 114th Jäger-Divisions. The motorised and armoured troops would be 29th Panzergrenadier and 26th Panzer-Divisions and the 1st Battalion of Panzer-Regiment 4. This combined force had a total of thirty-one battalions and included some new Tiger and Panther tanks from Germany. The 'Hermann Göring' Panzer-Division was to make a diversionary attack against Isola Bella.

Although Allied air forces dropped over 700 tons of bombs during the period February 13-15, Operation 'Fischfang' began punctually at 6.30 a.m. on February 16, less than twenty-four hours after the destruction of the Abbey at Monte Cassino. Of the six diversionary attacks against the US 3rd Division and the British 56th Division, only two made any progress. Two companies of the parachute demonstration battalion of the 'Hermann Göring' Panzer-Division, supported by tanks

and a second wave of the 'HG' reconnaissance battalion, managed to penetrate between 30th Infantry and 7th Infantry near Ponte Rotto but heavy losses forced the attackers to call it off. On the western sector, elements of Parachute-Regiment 10 infiltrated into 167th Brigade's positions south of Buonriposo ridge and two companies managed to penetrate to the Lateral Road before being mopped up by tanks of 46th RTR. The 8th Royal Fusiliers put in local counter-attacks and by noon the position was restored.

The main German attack was against US 45th Division. At 6.30 a.m. troops of 3rd Panzergrenadier and 715th Infanterie-Divisions, supported by tanks, and using Carroceto and the Factory as screen and supply points, pushed forward against 157th and 179th Infantry Regiments' positions astride the Via Anziante. The Germans tried to work down the Fosso della Ficocchia in 179th Regiment's 3rd Battalion sector and down the Fosso di Carroceto against 2nd Battalion of 157th Infantry Regiment. During the morning all attacks on 179th Infantry were beaten off with heavy losses to the Germans. In the afternoon, the demonstration unit which had been rushed from Germany, the Infanterie-Lehr-Regiment, on the Via Anziante, broke under shellfire, turned its back on the Americans and fell back in disorder — a not uncommon occurrence with a unit where the

officers and men have had little or no previous battle experience. Allied artillery fire caused heavy casualties and, when they had lost a high proportion of their officers, the troops turned and fled. However, more seasoned troops of the 3rd Panzergrenadier-Division managed to push forward about one mile astride the Via Anziante and 715th Infanterie-Division advanced about the same distance against 179th Infantry. Nevertheless, 45th Division's line remained intact and the Germans had suffered considerable casualties in tanks and personnel.

During the day, German aircraft flew 172 sorties but the results hardly justified the effort expended. One landing craft was sunk and one landing ship was damaged while, on shore, an ammunition dump north of Anzio was hit. Otherwise damage was slight. In contrast, XII Air Support Command flew 468 fighter bomber, light bomber and medium bomber sorties, dropping 174 tons of bombs on the battlefield, with Carroceto and the Factory receiving particular attention.

That evening, General von Mackensen ordered his two corps commanders, Schlemm and Herr, to continue the attack during the night of February 16/17 and gave as the objective for February 17 the road running west-east from San Lorenzo to Padiglione (the Lateral Road), VI Corps' final beachhead defensive line. Before midnight on February 16, Infanterie-Regiment 725 infiltrated round both flanks of one company of 157th Infantry covering Via Anziante and only fourteen survivors managed to withdraw at about 5 a.m. after a few tanks of 191st Tank Battalion had fired their 75mm guns at point-blank range into the waves of German infantry and had swept the surrounding fields with .50 machine guns.

Immediately adjacent to 157th Infantry, the 2nd Battalion of 179th Infantry also came under pressure during the night and soon the Germans had succeeded in prising open a gap between the two regiments. The Germans lost no time in exploiting this tactical advantage to deepen and widen the gap. After a bombing and strafing attack by about thirty-five Focke-Wulf 190s and Messerschmitt 109s at 7.40 a.m., the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of 179th Infantry found themselves under attack from a strong force made up of Infanterie-Regiment 725, two battalions of Infanterie-Regiment 145 of 65th Infanterie-Division and part of Infanterie-Regiment 741 of 114th Jäger-Division. By 8.55 a.m., the two battalions of 179th Infantry were forced to withdraw about 1,000 yards and, in fact, were unable to form a defensive line until they had fallen back to 'Dead End Road' (a dirt track leading eastwards off the Via Anziante), less than one mile from the final beachhead line.



Top: In the ruins of what was Carroceto, Allied and Axis armour lies in a yard beside the little chapel of San Antonio (above). The tower of Aprilia's church can be seen in the background above the 'Elettricità' sign. In the foreground two SdKfz 138/1 Ausf.H self-propelled 150mm infantry guns of the 3rd Panzergrenadier-Division. The SdKfz 251 half-track is probably the radio liaison vehicle for the battery. (IWM)



The Germans had succeeded in driving the centre of US 45th Division back over a mile on a two-mile front. During the afternoon, they tried to broaden and deepen this salient. They attacked continuously down the Via Anziante and against the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of 179th Infantry east of it. Battle groups of about battalion strength attacked one after another to maintain the momentum. In return, VI Corps retaliated strongly. Targets in the German salient were engaged four times by the entire corps artillery and the XII Air Support Command flew 724 sorties during the hours of daylight, dropping 830 tons of bombs. Even so, two German tanks managed to break through to the first overpass on the Via Anziante (over the main road and adjacent railway line), called 'the Flyover' or 'Flyover Bridge' within the salient, before being halted; further attempts were held off by tanks of US 1st Armored Regiment.

On the flanks of the German salient, 167th Infantry Brigade and the US 157th Infantry were offering stubborn and determined resistance west of Via Anziante and 180th Infantry (of 45th Division) were holding firm in the Fosso della Ficocchia/Spaccasassi area. As a precaution General Lucas had ordered British 1st Division to occupy part of the beachhead main line of resistance in the area of the Flyover. 2nd Infantry Brigade was disposed with the 6th Gordons west of the Flyover and 1st Loyals east of it, with the North Staffs in reserve to the rear. To afford greater depth and protection on the west flank, the 5th Grenadier Guards and 1st Irish Guards were positioned west and south-west of the Gordons. When General Penney was wounded, Major-General G. W. R. Templer took command of both 56th and 1st Divisions until February 23.

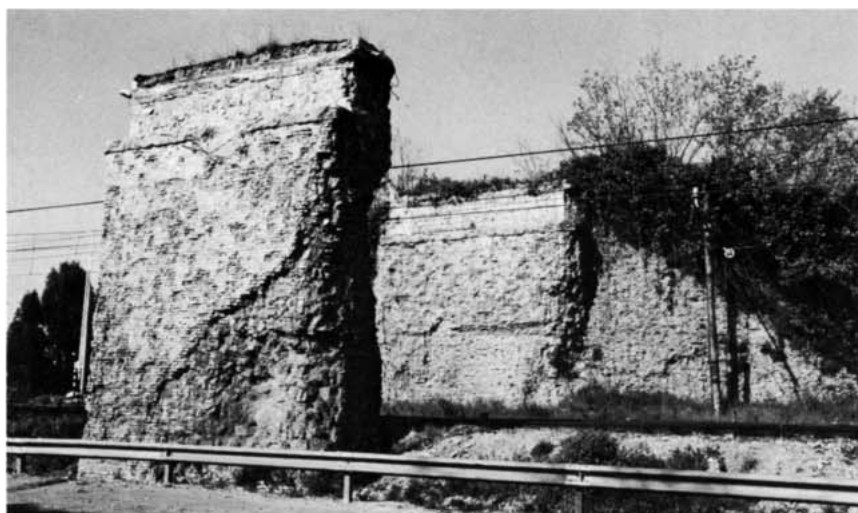
Although the Germans had not reached their objective during the day of February 17, namely the lateral road San Lorenzo-Padiglione, General von Mackensen nevertheless ordered that the pressure was to be maintained during the night of February 17/18 and decided that his mobile armoured force of 26th Panzer-Division and 29th Panzergrenadier-Division would be committed the next day in a final, all-out effort to reach Nettuno. For US VI Corps, therefore, February 18 was to see the climax of the battle. Von Mackensen was also aware that, on the first two days, his army had sustained at least 2,500 casualties and that some of his infantry battalions had no more than 150 men each. Keeping up the pressure, however, men of 715th Infantry-Division managed to infiltrate during the stormy night between 179th Infantry and 180th Infantry Regiments in the area of Fosso del Leschione, east of Via Anziante, while parts of Parachute-Regiment 4 and Infanterie-Regiment 65 isolated the 2nd Battalion of 157th Infantry Regiment, by getting in between it and 167th Brigade to its left, in the area of the caves and wadis south of Buonriposo ridge, west of Via Anziante. A counter-attack at 11.30 p.m. by the 2nd and

Looking from 'the Flyover' or 'First Overpass' bridge on the Via Anziante towards Aprilia in the distance. This was the axis of the German offensive on February 16, some panzers, one circled (below), actually reaching the bridge. (IWM/US Army)



3rd Battalions of 179th Infantry, supported by tanks of 191st Tank Battalion and 3rd Battalion of 157th Infantry, to regain some of the lost ground east of Via Anziante and to re-

establish contact with 157th Infantry's surrounded 2nd Battalion, failed to achieve either objective and left 179th Infantry in an exposed position.



Wynford Vaughan-Thomas was the BBC's war correspondent who landed at Anzio on D-Day, and in 1961 he published his account of the battle in his book 'Anzio': 'In the midst . . . one spot has been left untouched. The Flyover Bridge is still there — broken scarred and pitted by gunfire. Here is a place for memories . . . Even the remains of the old observation trench are still there and the ditch below it where an abandoned tank lay silent and askew for the four months of the battle . . . Can this really be the scene of the enemy counter-attack, the "killing ground" of the February struggles? The Flyover seems to be the only place in modern Anzio where the old soldier can ask himself these questions.' When we first visited Anzio in April 1976 we found the battered supports still standing but sadly they were demolished to build a new bridge shortly after we left.



Deutsche Reichsbahn Berlin 919219
Eisenbahnmuseum Berlin

Gesamt-Gewicht 210.000 kg
Länge 28,1 m

Transportart
P 10

Wird auf dem
Transport verladen

Leopold

Spezialwagen

Bauart Berlin 425



The Crisis

February 18-19

At dawn the German attacks started once more. There was hard fighting south of Buonriposo ridge but the beleaguered 2nd Battalion of 157th Infantry held firm. The main German attack was east of Via Anziante where the two battalions of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 67 (26th Panzer-Division) and three battalions of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 15 (of 29th Panzergrenadier-Division) — part of von Mackensen's mobile, armoured force — entered the battle in 715th Infanterie-Division's sector. The six battalions of Infanterie-Regiments 721 and 741 of 114th Jäger-Division and units of 3rd Panzergrenadier-Division were also involved. Profiting from the confusion resulting from the night's infiltration and the disorganisation caused by the unsuccessful American counter-attack, the Germans attacked with great determination and persistence the positions of the already depleted US 179th Infantry Regiment. The regiment's 3rd Battalion's positions collapsed and the remnants of the battalion filtered back to the final beachhead line — the Lateral Road. This forced the regiment's 2nd Battalion to withdraw and, by the middle of the morning, 179th Regiment was back to the positions covering the final line with the 1st Loyals to their left and the 2nd Battalion of 180th Infantry to their right. The latter was soon under attack from three sides and bloody fighting continued for the rest of the morning. Unfortunately, poor weather limited XII ASC to only 150 sorties in direct support but Allied artillery continued to take a heavy toll. At 11.10 a.m. an AOP spotted a force of tanks and over 2,000 German infantry moving down the Via Anziante, south of Carroceto. Within a few minutes he was able to co-ordinate the fire of 224 British and American guns on to the target. The ground on which the Germans were advancing suddenly erupted; after the smoke cleared the attacking force seemed to have disintegrated. During the next hour, this concentration of fire was brought down on four other targets. The Germans suffered very high losses yet there appeared to be no end to the waves of infantry thrown against the 45th Division.

During the afternoon, the Germans made the heaviest attacks of the day and the fighting reached its greatest intensity. The first thrust came from twelve tanks of 26th Panzer-Division from the north-west towards Padiglione and only a blown bridge across a ditch prevented their breaking through. Waves of German infantry came up against the Allied defensive line from the 1st Loyals near the Flyover, along the depleted front of 179th Infantry and against 180th Infantry to their right. Colonel W. O. Darby, who had commanded the ill-fated Ranger Force, had assumed command of 179th Infantry Regiment at 2 p.m. and, with his weak and battered troops, actually requested permission from 45th Division's commander, General Eagles, to withdraw from the corps' final defensive line southwards to the shelter of Bosco di Padiglione to reorganise. General Eagles refused and ordered him to stand fast and hold the final beachhead position, at the same time promising the support of the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry. Still the Germans came in, across the flat, open fields and the last thousand yards between Dead End Road and the embankment of the Lateral Road. Time and again, they met heavy shell fire and machine gun, mortar and rifle fire from the Lateral Road. They sustained appalling casualties. The Loyals beat back one attack only after hand-to-hand fighting. Even so, some small detachments managed to infiltrate as far as the Lateral Road. For a short while, it was 'touch and go', as the Germans fought



An ebullient Major-General John P. Lucas greeting Brigadier-General Robert T. Frederick, the commander of the 1st Special Service Force, outside VI Corps HQ in Nettuno. This picture was taken on February 2 and things were then not going too badly, if somewhat slowly, for the invaders. The following day, however, the Germans hit back and within three weeks the General had been replaced. (US Army)

desperately to make the final breakthrough. But the beachhead line held and towards 9.30 p.m. there was a lull and some evidence that they might be pulling back to reorganise.

General Truscott now urged General Lucas to mount a counter-attack with the reserves which could be collected together. Lucas hesitated but General Clark who was at VI Corps HQ supported Truscott and, in the end, Lucas under pressure agreed. In the meantime, 2nd Infantry Brigade and the US 179th Infantry had ordered up to the front all rear echelon troops, storemen, cooks, even men of the dock operating companies.

Before the Allied counter-attack got under way on February 19, the Germans renewed their attacks just after 4 a.m., concentrating on the 1st Loyals and 1st Battalion of the

luckless 179th Infantry. Supported by some tanks of 26th Panzer-Division, the 1st and 3rd Battalions of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 15 again succeeded in penetrating to the Lateral Road east of Via Anziante but by 8 a.m. were forced to withdraw. During the morning, tanks of 26th Panzer-Division tried repeatedly to advance down Via Anziante but were held up by the US 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion who knocked out at least seven German tanks. At noon, an infantry attack by men of 3rd Panzergrenadier-Division was effectively broken up by artillery fire.

Earlier in the day, at 6.30 a.m., the counter-attack agreed by Lucas the previous day had gone in. The US 6th Armored Infantry and the 30th Infantry (from US 3rd Division) and a battalion of Shermans of the



Lucas's headquarters at the beginning of February was located in the old Italian artillery barracks at No. 39 Via Santa Maria. Today the building is in poor shape presenting a very run-down appearance much out of keeping with its historic past.



Above: On February 20 the Corps HQ was pictured here having moved to the Cafe of the Artilleryman on the Via Romana. (The name on the street sign, 'Vicolo Cieco' simply means 'dead end street'!) The caption states that the headquarters was underground but on investigation Jean Paul found that the Osteria dell' Artigliere only has a simple basement. *Above right:* Ten days later the same Signal Corps photographer Bell returned to take a 'then and now' comparison from exactly the same spot to record the addition of a sandbagged blast wall as a protection against the bombing and shelling. *Right:* Today it is a food shop sporting the appropriate title of 'OK USA'.



1st Armored Regiment advanced along the axis of the 'Bowling Alley', the Padiglione-Carroceto road. The 30th Infantry were astride and north of the road and the 6th Armored Infantry south. Although temporarily slowed up during the morning by fire from Tiger tanks and German infantry along the Fosso della Ficoccia, the advancing Americans had reached their objective — the Dead End Road — by 4 p.m. About 200 prisoners had been taken, from elements of Infanterie-Regiments 741, 721 and 735 and a company from Engineer-Battalion 114. During the afternoon, the 1st Loyals and a



VI Corps also occupied an extensive complex of caves carved out of solid rock and used in happier days to store wine. With the help of Silvano Casaldi of the town authorities, Jean Paul was guided to the spot in the grounds of the Villa Borghese, midway between Nettuno and Anzio, by a local policeman, Roberto Maiozzi.



'Dead End Road' today — no longer the bitterly-contested track of 1944 and no longer a no through road.



A mile to the south 'Lateral Road' from Padiglione crossed the Via Anziate at the 'First Overpass' bridge.



company of the 2nd North Staffs, supported by a squadron of 46th RTR, attacked to wipe out a pocket of resistance along the Lateral Road and advanced about a mile up the Via Anziate, capturing over 200 prisoners.

During February 19, the reduction in the numbers of tanks and men employed in the attacks of the morning and the variety of units from which the demoralised prisoners came indicated that, by the evening, AOK 14's offensive had been defeated and that VI Corps' beachhead had been won. In fact, it is now known that on the afternoon of February 19 Hitler agreed to Kesselring's proposal to discontinue the offensive. But on February 20 Kesselring reminded von Mackensen that his first task was still the elimination of the Allied beachhead.

During the period February 16-20, AOK 14 had suffered 5,389 casualties, killed, wounded and missing. VI Corps had taken 609 prisoners, but the Allied casualties totalled 3,496 killed, wounded and missing. The Germans reported the capture of 1,304 prisoners. By February 19, the combat strength of the 65th Infanterie-Division was only 901 officers and men and Infanterie-Regiment 735 of the 715th Infanterie-Division had only 185 officers and men on February 20.

This German light armoured car, an SdKfz 222 belonging to Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 129 of the 29th Panzergrenadier-Division — the Falke Division (note the falcon insignia) — has been disabled just north of the bridge. This is a picture from later in the campaign after it had been repaired with Bailey sections. (IWM)



JP needed considerable nerve to stand in the middle of an Italian main road for his comparison. In the background the new flyover.



VI Corps holds the beachhead

February 20-March 3

Between February 20 and February 29, the fighting was confined to hard-fought, local actions in the sectors of the two shoulders of the German salient, south of Buonriposo ridge and east of Via Anziante. VI Corps was anxious to strengthen their defences to contain the salient. The boundary between 45th Infantry Division and the US 3rd Division was moved nearly one mile west from Carano and responsibility for the left shoulder of the salient passed to the British 1st and 56th Divisions, with the former relieving 3rd Battalion, 157th Infantry and 6th Armored Infantry, north of the Flyover and west of Via Anziante. This relief was carried out on the night of February 21/22 without any immediate reaction from the Germans. The shift of divisional boundaries reduced 45th Division's front by nearly half.

The newly-arrived 169th Infantry Brigade (British 56th Division), assigned to the task of relieving the beleaguered 2nd Battalion of US 157th Infantry, were not so fortunate as 1st Division and became involved in what was to be known as the Battle of the Caves, in part of the 'wadi country' in an area about 600 yards west of Via Anziante. On the same night, February 21/22, the Germans had decided to continue their local offensive in an area ideally suited to infiltration, and the 2/7th Battalion Queen's Royal Regiment suffered about seventy casualties on their way up to 2nd

Above: Wounded are carried to the quayside in Anzio for repatriation to hospitals in southern Italy. (US Army) Below: Now the Via Porto Innocenziano has been widened, the old docking platform being lost under the roadway and the steps repositioned. Hence our comparison was taken from a badly-swinging fishing boat.



Battalion, 157th Infantry. They arrived at the cave area in some disorder and it was impossible for the US 2nd Battalion to leave the caves that night and get back. They managed to break out in the early hours of February 23. This first-class battalion, which had been surrounded and under constant attack for the

best part of a week and had given no ground, came out of action with 225 men, all that remained of the original 800. Although the 2/7th Queen's had successfully relieved 157th Regiment's 2nd Battalion in the caves, the 2/6th Queen's failed to get supplies through and another German attack, in which two



Likewise prisoners are shipped from the battle zone to ease the demand on facilities and supplies. (US Army)



General Sir Harold Alexander, the overall commander, personally visited the beachhead several times. He first came ashore on the morning of D-Day with General Clark to hasten the advance from it, returning with the Fifth Army Commander three days later. Alexander and Clark were both disappointed at the lack of aggressiveness shown by Lucas, and Alexander came back again on D + 9 to spend three days ashore on an in-depth tour of the battlefield, taking the time to speak to all the senior commanders. By February 16 General Alexander had

arranged with Clark that Major-General Lucian K. Truscott, the commander of the 3rd Infantry Division, should replace General Lucas who was considered by Clark to be 'tired physically and mentally from the long responsibilities of command in battle'. It was left to the Americans to actually put the change into effect and Lucas temporarily became Clark's deputy commander in Fifth Army. Clark arranged for him to leave for a rest period at Sorrento and after three weeks he was transferred to command an Army in the United States.

companies were overrun, sealed off the 2/7th Queen's on February 23. Some of the latter succeeded in getting back to the 2/6th Queen's positions and the effort to hold the 'caves' area had to be abandoned.

In the meantime, General Lucas, whose cautious and defensive policy, it can be argued, had been vindicated by the defeat of the German counter-offensive, was relieved of his command on February 22 and replaced by General Truscott, commander US 3rd Division. The general feeling was that Lucas had not been sufficiently aggressive. In any case, it had become obvious to the Allied High Command by February 20 that there was no hope of any decisive success at Anzio in the very near future, and, when it became clear that the Second Battle of Cassino, like the First, had failed to break through the Gustav Line, it was decided that the beachhead must be 'organised to hold out for a considerable time'. Thoughts were concentrated on a new offensive at Cassino. So Anzio, which had been conceived as the method of breaking the deadlock on the main Gustav Line, was now itself deadlocked and in need of rescue by another offensive at Cassino.

On February 24, the British 18th Infantry Brigade (detached from 1st Armoured Division), comprising the 1st Battalion The Buffs, the 14th Battalion The Sherwood Foresters and the 9th Battalion The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, arrived at Anzio.

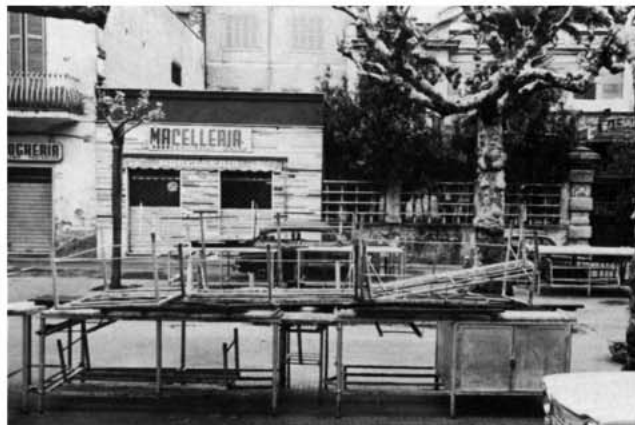
At this time, Kesselring and von Mackensen were planning a second counter-offensive between Ponte della Crocetta and Isola Bella towards the northern edge of Bosco di Padiglione. But Hitler, without ever having seen the ground but convinced of his superior tactical wisdom, decreed that the new attack was to be made between the Astura river and the main Mussolini Canal towards Nettuno. Kesselring and von Mackensen, accordingly, revised their plan, although the latter was concerned at the many gullies and ditches running across the line of attack which would present obstacles to mechanised movement.

On February 28 an intercepted wireless message gave the next day as the date of the attack. The usual diversionary attacks, this time by I Parachute-Corps, came in against the 1st and 56th Divisions south of Buonriposo ridge and west of the Fosso di



Top: General Alexander on the Via Antonio Gramsci in Nettuno and above congratulating officers and men on the Piazza Giuseppe Mazzini. (IWM)





Caronte, in the notorious wadi area, in the North and South Lobster Claw (most of the wadis were christened with a name usually derived from their shape) and in Pantoni. Strong attacks were made against 168th Brigade's positions west of Via Anziate and against the Sherwood Foresters and the 2/6th Queen's, in the middle of an inter-battalion relief. Although the former lost a company, the defence line remained unchanged.

The main German attack began with the first streaks of dawn on February 29, when infantry and tanks surged forward against the US 3rd Division. Panzergrenadier-Regiment 1028 (attached to 114th Jäger-Division) had Carano as its objective. Greatly outnumbering 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, the regiment's 1st Battalion swung south-west across the fields between Fosso di Carano and Fosso Formato del Bove and penetrated about 800 yards. West of Carano, 2nd Battalion put in two attacks which made little progress but, to the east, 1st Battalion of Grenadier-Regiment 955 (of 362nd Infanterie-Division), attacking between the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of 7th Infantry along the axis of the Fosso delle Mole, infiltrated to within 300 yards of Ponte della Crocetta.

Further east, some Mark IV and Tiger tanks, and men of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 9, 26th Panzer-Division, attacked at about noon down the Cisterna-Campomorte road and captured a bridge about 1,000 yards south-west of Ponte Rotto, when their advance was checked. After dark, American engineers went forward and mined the road and anti-tank guns and tank destroyers were deployed. To the left of 26th Panzer, elements of the 'Hermann Göring' Panzer-Division came up against 15th Infantry holding ground on both sides of the Conca-Cisterna road and some forty to fifty of the attackers managed to infiltrate to the east of Isola Bella. They were, however, driven back by a counter-attack and 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion knocked out seven tanks and damaged nine others which were operating down the roads from Cisterna and Ponte Rotto.

During the morning, cloud and squally weather prevented Allied air support but, after 3 p.m., about 240 fighter bombers and light bombers bombed and strafed enemy tanks and infantry along the US 3rd Division's front. On the division's right, Engineer-Battalion 715 and elements of 16th SS Panzergrenadier-Division (all under command of 715th Infanterie-Division) put in a diversionary attack in the sector of 504th Parachute Battalion to try to capture a bridge over the Fosso di Cisterna, running into the main Mussolini Canal. The attack was broken up by the 4th Ranger Battalion. Battle Group Schindler, made up of miscellaneous units of the 715th Infanterie and 'Hermann Göring' Panzer-Divisions, also failed to gain a bridgehead over the Mussolini Canal, south of the village of Borgo Sabatino, losing 4 officers and 107 men taken prisoner in the process.

At the end of this first day of their second

Major-General Truscott's appointment brought a positive change to the atmosphere in the beachhead. His style of command was the opposite to his predecessor and he made it his business to get out and around the battlefield — to see and be seen. He also improved relations between his American and British subordinates which Lucas had not gone out of his way to foster. Men of both nations received decorations from General Truscott at this ceremony held in the Piazza del Mercato on April 1. (IWM)



offensive, the Germans had scarcely dented US 3rd Division's outer defence line, though the latter's forward units had sustained heavy losses.

It rained throughout the night of February 29/March 1 and for much of March 1. The counter-attack launched by the 2nd Battalion of 30th Infantry late on the afternoon of February 29 was continued at dawn on March 1 and by 8.30 a.m. had reached the former outpost line of 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion just east of Carano. A German counter-attack in the afternoon was broken up by a very heavy artillery concentration.

Realising after the failure of the attacks on February 29 that von Mackensen was not going to break through, Kesselring at 6.40 p.m. on March 1 issued instructions that the offensive was to be broken off. The last major drive against the Anzio beachhead came to an end. German casualties for the two days were 2,731, though these were compiled from incomplete returns.

As if to celebrate the end of the second German offensive, Allied air forces, in fine weather on March 2, dropped a total of 566 tons of bombs in the area Carroceto/Cisterna/Campoleone/Velletri.



The wadi country — now at peace after the bitter battles on February 29.



The stalemate of the Anzio front from March to the break-out in May simulated to a large extent the static warfare of the Western Front in the First World War. Artillery was a dominant



factor — here a 155mm 'Long Tom' is unloaded on the Via Zanardelli — now a popular corner of Anzio lined with fish restaurants. (US Army)

Stalemate

March-May 22

After the second German offensive, both sides took the opportunity to reorganise and regroup. On the Allied side the British 5th Infantry Division, consisting of 13th, 15th and 17th Infantry Brigades, arrived at Anzio from the Garigliano front between March 5 and 11 to relieve 56th Division, which departed to Egypt to refit. Between March 7 and 9 the 24th Guards Brigade was relieved by 18th Infantry Brigade, which had arrived on February 24 and which now came under command of British 1st Division. The American 504th Parachute Infantry Battalion departed on April 1 and the Ranger force also left. These losses had been more than offset by the arrival at Anzio of the US 34th Infantry Division, which began to disembark on March 21, and the arrival of 14,000 reinforcements during March. The 34th Division, which had so nearly captured Monte Cassino during the First Battle of Cassino early in February, relieved the US 3rd Infantry Division on the Cisterna front on March 28. By the end of the month, General Truscott had in VI Corps five infantry divisions and most of one armoured division — some 90,000 men, a strength considerably in excess of that of AOK 14.

On the German side, the 'Hermann Göring' Panzer-Division left for the Lucca area to refit and act as a reserve while the 114th Jäger-Division was transferred to LI Mountain-Corps of AOK 10. Von Mackensen's mobile strike force, 26th Panzer and 29th Panzer-grenadier-Divisions, was withdrawn from the line to form an army reserve, available to either AOK 14 at Anzio or AOK 10 in the Gustav Line. Some replacement units arrived at the beachhead perimeter including two battalions of Italian troops, who were employed mainly in the Littoria area east of the Mussolini Canal. The fighting strength of AOK 14 in mid-March was about 63,000 men with approximately 43,000 administrative troops. But the effect of these changes was to leave in LXXXVI Panzer-Corps only 362nd Infanterie-Division (with Grenadier-Regiments 954, 955 and 956) and 715th Infanterie-Division (Grenadier-Regiments 725 and 735).

After March 3, the character of the fighting in the beachhead underwent a radical change and there were no large-scale operations until May when the Fifth and Eighth Armies broke the stalemate in the Fourth Battle of Cassino. There were, however, local clashes where one side or the other attempted to strengthen and improve defence lines. Typical of these was 18th Infantry Brigade's unsuccessful attempt on March 13 and 14 to drive the Germans from positions in the Fosso di Caronte, a little east of the wadi country and to the west of Via Anziante. On March 15, 509th Parachute Battalion made a successful raid near Carano



Good shooting depends on good observation and the flat terrain made ground spotting almost impossible for the Allies whereas German observers were sitting pretty on the high ground inland. The RAF brought in No. 655 (AOP) Squadron with their Austers (seen here on an improvised strip behind Nettuno), German gunners and pilots doing their utmost to bring down the little aircraft, carrying their specially-trained spotters. (IWM)





Shellfire, and bombing, took an increasing toll of men and material. After the costly attacks in February, the Luftwaffe had switched to night raids and the shelling, sporadic during the daylight hours, increased substantially after dark. On the night of March 17 Lieutenant W. M. Condren and five platoons of Company D, 387th Engineer Battalion were unloading supplies during the blackout when the ship they were



unloading was hit. As it began to keel over, attempts were made to secure it to the dockside and, although some men managed to scramble ashore, many were trapped when the ship turned turtle. A crane was brought up and the side of the vessel ripped open to try to rescue the entombed men but the official caption to this picture released in August 1945 states that 'the ship was sunk with all hands on board'. (US Army)

but 17th Infantry Brigade (of the newly arrived British 5th Division) had little success when they tried to improve their positions in the wadi country. On April 15, at the cost of one casualty and two medium tanks, the 2nd Regiment of 1st Special Service Force, supported by twelve tanks of 1st Armored Regiment, mounted a successful raid across the Mussolini Canal on a village south-west of Littoria and returned with sixty-one prisoners, including seventeen Italians.

Otherwise, with both Allied and German forward positions stabilised, conditions at Anzio resembled the trench warfare on the Western Front during the First World War. Except when some movement on either side provoked a sniper's bullet or a burst of machine gun fire or brought down either mortar or artillery fire, the front lines in daylight were still and quiet. With darkness, the beachhead came to life. Patrols went out or were beaten off; trenches and fox-holes were repaired and strengthened; food, ammunition and supplies were brought forward; the wounded were evacuated, the dead buried and reliefs carried out. Bursts of harassing fire from time to time, and even flares, would suddenly put a stop to all movement and activity. Life in the wadi country, west of Via Anziate, was particularly unpleasant, where the bottoms of the 40-foot deep wadis, even in broad daylight, were shrouded in gloom and foreboding by the vegetation, often decaying, at the top. In the deeper wadis were dug-outs and trenches all the way to the top, protected by sandbags. The forward slit trenches were no more than 50 yards from the Germans.

Unlike the Western Front, there were no rear areas, as such, at Anzio; no one was safe. The whole beachhead area was within range of observed artillery fire; the bulk of VI Corps' casualties during the period were caused by artillery fire and air raids. The Germans used guns from the vicious 88mm to a giant 280mm railway gun, the latter becoming known as 'Anzio Annie' or the 'Anzio Express'. Although they abandoned air raids during daylight hours after the heavy losses in late January and in February, they continued with night attacks when the weather was suitable. Shelling during the day was often sporadic but generally became heavier after dark. Even the American hospital area near Anzio was not safe; a total of 92 medical personnel were killed and 387 wounded.

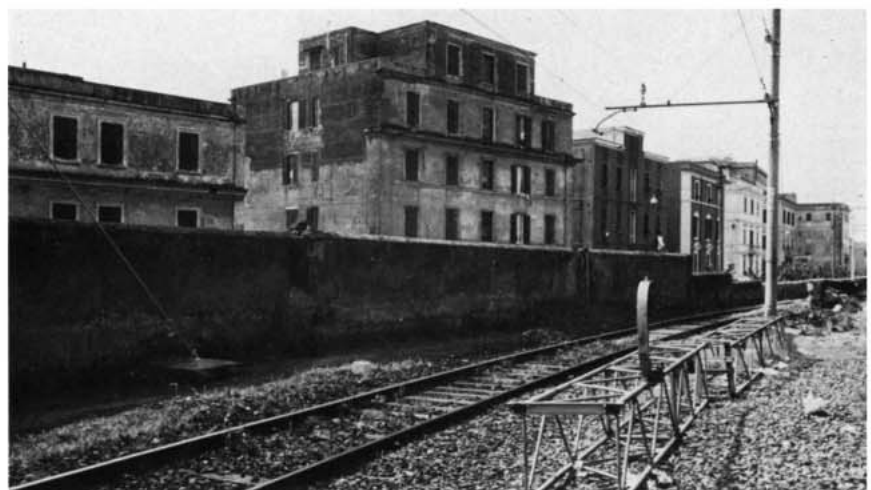
During this period of relative inactivity in the beachhead, both the Allies and the Germans considered plans for further offensive operations at Anzio but none ever materialised. As the wet winter turned to warm spring, both sides felt that the next turn of events would originate, not at Anzio, but on the Gustav Line front, where Alexander was

planning a large-scale offensive which Kesselring felt was inevitable. In the meantime, everything required by the American-British force, food, ammunition, equipment and supplies, had to be brought by

sea from Naples. The average daily tonnage of cargo delivered to the beachhead rose from about 2,000 tons in February to just over 5,000 in March (when a total of 157,000 tons arrived).



'Leopold', or 'Anzio Annie' as she was known to the Allies, was one of the most formidable weapons ranged against the bridgehead. She was first reported in action on March 24 at which time, for example, over eighty per cent of the combat casualties in 3rd Division were being caused by shell splinters. Annie was finally run to ground in June in the railway yard at Civitavecchia, the coastal port of Rome some forty miles north-west of the city. Today she sits on the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, USA, see centre pages. (US Army)





The Break-out

May 23-June 4

On the night of May 11/12, the Fifth and Eighth Armies launched their spring offensive which was to become known as the Fourth Battle of Cassino. The Fifth Army held a narrow front between the Liri valley and the coast, with the US II Corps, consisting of the US 85th and 88th Divisions on the left and the French Expeditionary Corps on the right. The Eighth Army front extended from the Liri valley to the Adriatic. After a week of very hard fighting the latter had broken into the Liri valley and captured the Cassino mountains. But, opposite the Fifth Army, German resistance had all but collapsed and the two corps made spectacular gains through the Aurunci mountains.

During the first days of this spring offensive, US VI Corps in the beachhead was waiting to play its part — the break-out. In early May, Combat Command 'B' joined its parent formation — the US 1st Armored Division — and between May 18 and 22 the US 36th Division landed at Anzio, bringing the number of divisions there up to seven. In the meantime, Kesselring had been forced to send his army group reserve, the 26th Panzer and 29th Panzergrenadier-Divisions, southwards to try to stem the Allied advance and this left only 362nd and 715th Infantry-Divisions in LXXVI Corps holding the Cisterna and Mussolini Canal sectors of the beachhead perimeter.

Alexander's plan for the Anzio break-out was the plan he wanted VI Corps to follow originally in January — an attack in the direction of Valmontone to cut Route 6 and AOK 10's line of retreat. Clark had not been

Cisterna was finally captured on May 24 having been almost totally destroyed during the four-month campaign. Today it has been totally rebuilt, making an exact comparison on the 'High Street' somewhat difficult. (US Army)

too enthusiastic about this plan in January, with good reason; this time he objected that he would be carrying out a flank advance across the front of the German-held Colli Laziali and that AOK 10 could still escape by using other roads for the retreat from the south. Alexander accepted Clark's first objection but not the second; however, he seemed not to change his mind about the direction of attack towards Route 6 and Clark reluctantly accepted Alexander's wishes that the cutting of Route 6 was to be the main objective of VI Corps' attack. The destruction of German forces remained the single-minded aim for





The railway bridge was the first Allied objective in the final battle for the town. (US Army)

Alexander; the capture of Rome was secondary and, indeed, from a military standpoint unimportant. But Clark had his eyes fixed on Rome and its capture by American forces and, before the break-out from the beachhead, seems to have decided that the slightest hold-up or setback in the Valmontone operation would justify a change of direction of attack to west of Colli Laziali, which would lead to Rome and still allow retreating German forces to be cut off north of Colli Laziali.

Against this background of diverging views, at 6.30 a.m. on May 23, American tanks and infantry of the US 1st Armored and 3rd Infantry Divisions and the 1st Special Service Force launched their attack, after a heavy barrage, all along the front from Carano to the Mussolini Canal. After meeting stiff resistance at first and losing a number of tanks and tank destroyers in German minefields, the 1st Armored Division, by the evening, had crossed the Cisterna-Campoleone railway and Route 7 below Cisterna had been cut. Resuming the attack on May 24, troops of the US 3rd Division captured Cisterna and penetrated two miles north, capturing about 1,000 prisoners on May 25.

At the same time, significant developments were taking place further south. Terracina, at the southern end of the coastal plain which extended north-westwards to the Anzio beachhead, was captured by troops of the US II Corps on the night of May 23/24. Advancing rapidly across the flats of the Pontine Marshes, they met at 7.31 a.m. on May 25, near Borgo Grappa south of Littoria, the US 36th Combat Engineers who had pushed south-east from the bridgehead. The Anzio beachhead was a beachhead no longer. The perimeter front along the main Mussolini Canal, facing south-east, quickly disintegrated and the Anzio bridgehead now became the left flank of the US Fifth Army.

For Kesselring, this was now the moment of decision. The left wing of von Mackensen's AOK 14 had collapsed and the army would have to carry out a left wheel in reverse to man the Caesar Line, the next defensive position south of Rome, and face southwards. In order to keep open the escape route for AOK 10's XIV Corps, now in full retreat from the Gustav Line, he speeded up the concentration of the 'Hermann Göring' Panzer-Division (from north of Rome) in the Valmontone area to cover Route 6. General Truscott had already told General Clark that von Mackensen, fully aware of the serious threat VI Corps would pose, might concentrate the 'Hermann Göring' Panzer, 3rd Panzer-grenadier and 4th Parachute-Divisions in the Valmontone area and, if that seemed likely to hold up VI Corps and if there was any sign of withdrawal by the Germans from the western sector of the former beachhead, then an attack to the north-west might be a better way

to cut off a German withdrawal north of Colli Laziali.

However, the advance towards Valmontone was going well and by the evening of May 25

the US 3rd Division was near Cori and the US 1st Division, half-way between Cori and Velletri, was facing the entrance of the Velletri Gap, between the Lepini Mountains



Roger Bell, our then-ETO expert since departed for pastures new, pictured at the railway station thirty-two years after the battle. (US Army)





Left: The picture which is so often used to depict the fall of the town — the headless statue in the centre of Cisterna. **Above:** Out of the ruins has arisen a peaceful piazza surmounted by the restored figure.

and Colli Laziali, leading to Valmontone and Route 6. An armoured force was, in fact, in the gap making for Ardena, less than four miles from the highway. But, when Truscott returned to his command post late in the afternoon, he was 'dumbfounded' to hear from a Fifth Army staff officer that General Clark's orders were to switch the main attack to the north-west as soon as possible. Truscott had noticed no signs of a German withdrawal from the western part of the old beachhead and thought that his troops might well reach Valmontone the next day, May 26. He tried to get in touch with Clark but the latter had already left the Anzio area. In retrospect, there is justification for believing that this change of plan threw away whatever chance there was of cutting the German line of retreat and destroying a large part of AOK 10.

At 11 p.m. on May 25, orders were issued to divisional commands implementing the army commander's change of plan. The US 34th Infantry, 45th Infantry and 1st Armored Divisions were all now directed to attack the German forces west of Colli Laziali, while only the 3rd Division continued along the old axis towards Valmontone. Although the latter captured Ardena, only three miles from Route 6 near Valmontone on May 27, it was then brought to a halt by a force comprising the 'Hermann Göring' Panzer, 334th Infanterie (from the Adriatic) and 92nd Infanterie-Divisions. The three American divisions, attacking on the new axis towards Velletri and Lanuvio, at first made progress and then for the next four days made little or no impression on the Caesar Line Between Colli Laziali and the sea.

The British 1st and 5th Infantry Divisions played a minor role in the break-out. The 1st Green Howards had made a fierce diversionary attack near the coast and on May 29, the 2nd Cameronians, 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers and the 2nd Wiltshires were to attack in daylight to the north-west. The Royal Irish



After they had been liberated from their prisoner-of-war camp in Poland by the Russians, this party of Darby's Rangers, who had been captured on January 30 during Colonel William Darby's attempt to take Cisterna (see page 15), returned to the town en route for the USA.

Fusiliers were more fortunate than the other two battalions, being led through the German minefields by two German deserters who had given themselves up at dusk the previous evening. On May 30 the three battalions had come up against the western end of the Caesar Line in the area of Ardea.

By the evening of this day, Fifth Army's advance seemed everywhere to have ground to a halt. No progress was being made on the original axis of advance towards Route 6 and none on the new axis west of Colli Laziali. The US II Corps had assumed responsibility for the sector east of Colli Laziali and the US 85th Infantry Division came up to reinforce the US

3rd Division, still short of Route 6 and Valmontone. Then, suddenly, when Clark had planned his next move, an attack by both II Corps and VI Corps, something quite unexpected happened. Patrols from US 36th Division, on reconnaissance east of Velletri in the foothills of Colli Laziali, found a gap in the German positions on Monte Artemisio between the units of I Parachute-Corps and those of LXXXVI Corps to the east. 36th Division quickly infiltrated first 142nd Regiment and then 143rd Regiment and occupied Monte Artemisio. By dawn on May 31, the Americans had made a deep penetration of the German defences and held



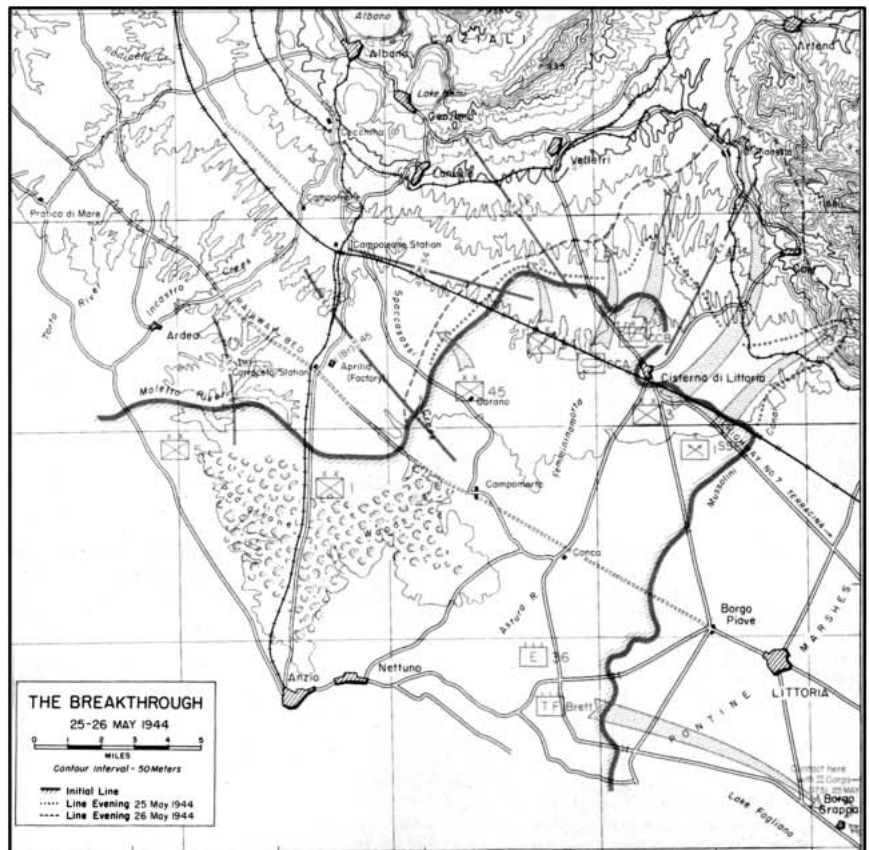


The capture of Cisterna came as forces from the beachhead broke out along the coast to make contact with American forces advancing from the south. The railway station can be seen in the foreground.

on to their new positions despite a counter-attack by part of the 'Hermann Göring' Panzer-Division.

Although their positions were now untenable, AOK 14 fought very determinedly during the three days May 31-June 2 to check Fifth Army's advance. German resistance west of Colli Laziali against US VI Corps was particularly strong. However, to the east, the 'Hermann Göring' Panzer and 334th Infanterie-Divisions were forced to give ground by the US 85th, 88th and 3rd Divisions and Valmontone was captured on June 2. 36th Division reached the central heights of the Colli Laziali and, during the night of June 2/3, the main German forces withdrew to the north of the Tiber, leaving only scattered rearguards to delay the Fifth Army. On the Adriatic front, German formations were forced to conform to the retreat of AOK 14 and both German armies hurried northwards as best they could, leaving behind some 20,000 prisoners.

Generalfeldmarschall Kesselring had declared Rome an 'open city' and the bridges over the Tiber were left intact. The leading American troops reached the outskirts of the city at about 8 a.m. on June 4 and, during the afternoon, men of VI Corps' 1st Armored Division and of II Corps entered the city along Routes 7 and 6 respectively. In the early evening American troops were in the Piazza Venezia in the centre of the city.





1976-1986

We have already commented in a previous issue on the problems we have faced with photography at Anzio, notably resulting from our desire to include comparison aerial pictures of the battlefield to correspond with an excellent series taken by the American forces in 1944-45. All Italian aerospace is owned by the military and one has to obtain permission before any photography can take place. There are additional complications at Anzio because the American landing beaches now fall within an army training area. Once obtained, the permission states from which airfield the flight is authorised, and on which day. In addition one must undertake the flight with an approved aerial photography company.

We feel that photographs from the air can add immeasurably to one's understanding of a particular incident or battle and, regardless of the costs involved, have always specially taken these where we felt it necessary. However charges of ten times that requested for comparable aircraft hire in the United Kingdom or in any other Western European country unfortunately ruled out the idea. There was also a minor complication in that the aerodrome, the Aeroporte d'Urbe, east of Rome, was closed on the day specified in the permission! Having commenced research in the area ten years ago and paid two return visits to Italy, we have regrettably therefore had to decide to go to press without the comparisons we wanted.

Our thanks are extended to the Italian Tourist Board in Anzio, under Attilio Pucci, who were most helpful in the provision of resources, photographs and other material, and for the assistance given by Antonio Sannino. Signor Silvano Casaldi in Nettuno Town Hall was also extremely helpful but he was saddened to once again hear us refer to the 'Anzio' landings whereas the Americans actually came ashore at Nettuno. The history books have perpetuated the all-embracing description of the 'Anzio' beachhead and naturally people in Nettuno feel somewhat jilted, and no doubt not a little jealous, at the publicity which continues to surround the neighbouring town.

Due to its proximity to the Italian capital — one might call Anzio the Romans' summer playground — the population of some 30,000 inhabitants in winter climbs to over 130,000 in July and August. These are the months to be avoided by the battlefield visitor, but one should also beware of going during the actual months when the battle was fought, for the weather can then be very poor as Jean Paul Pallud found out to his cost in February 1986. May would seem to be an ideal time, with fine weather almost guaranteed.

Above left: In the summertime this is a pleasant outdoor restaurant on the promenade facing Anzio harbour. **Above right:** However if we turn the clock back thirty years we find that the repaired wall once held a hidden secret: blocks of German explosive wired for the demolition of the port.

Anzio and Nettuno have changed relatively little and, although both towns have been heavily developed since the war, we found most places depicted in the wartime photographs could be recognised quite easily. More difficulty is experienced in Cisterna, which suffered from a bombing overkill.

As we have intimated earlier, X-Ray beach is now incorporated into an artillery range, so visitors wanting to see where American forces landed will be disappointed . . . except perhaps for the fact that the 'Bang-boom' of the firing practice as the shells explode a couple of kilometres out to sea adds a sense of realism to an otherwise deserted beach. On the other hand, the British beach north of Anzio is open to tourists.

For anyone who has driven in Italy, the reputation of the resident drivers is second to none. We felt relatively safe charging into Rome in our Land-Rover with cow-catcher but even Jean Paul, accustomed to more speedy French driving habits, was duly impressed by the unpredictable Italians. Parking is a continual problem even in Anzio and Nettuno and several hours were spent at both locations waiting for particular cars to move which would otherwise have spoilt the comparison. A good map is also essential as many of the old wartime roads have been moved, closed or altered, the famous 'Dead End Road' no longer living up to its name.

Since our first visit, the area around the Pantano Ditch, where the US Rangers were



'X-Ray' beach — now closed to visitors. Jean Paul photographed the explosion of a shell fired on the Italian artillery range during his visit in February 1986.





ambushed, has become a signposted battlefield. When we first explored Isola Bella we found live rounds still lying where they had been discarded thirty years before. Today, ten years on, the battle-scarred gateposts still survive: a graphic memorial to the hundreds of men who met their deaths in these now-peaceful fields.

We close our feature on Operation 'Shingle' with the story of Angelita of Anzio — the little six-year-old girl found by a fusilier of the Royal Scots wandering in a minefield behind Peter beach on D-Day and now immortalised in bronze (see back cover) as a symbol of the innocent children killed in the war.

Angelina's story was told in 'Weekend' in 1964 by the man who found her — ex-Fusilier Christopher Hayes. As the little girl could not say where her mother had gone, she stayed with his section but on D+10 Angelita was riding on a lorry when it was hit by a shell. 'My rifle was shattered,' said Chris Hayes. 'I lifted Angelita out of the truck. She died and I left her at the roadside . . .'

After the war he tried to trace her parents through the Red Cross but in vain until details reached the Italian press which soon turned the story into a nationwide hunt. A song was written, 'Angelita di Anzio' and early in 1965 came the amazing news that Angelita had not died and that she was alive and well in the shape of Signora Angelita de Luca. The Anzio authorities extended an invitation to ex-Fusilier Hayes to return to Italy to meet her and a grand reunion was prepared in the Town Hall.

On February 2, Chris Hayes arrived in Rome and was driven the thirty miles to Anzio where a press conference had been arranged

These GIs of the 45th Division are advised in no uncertain terms that Nettuno is 'Off Limits'. Although this corner of the Via Giacomo Matteotti has since been rebuilt, look what we found still painted on a villa in Anzio!



for the following day. However, officials were dismayed when Hayes flatly rejected the claims of the woman who had come forward. He reiterated that Angelita had died in 1944: 'I held her in my arms and she didn't move for ten minutes. She was soaked in blood and her head wounds were so terrible that I had no doubt she was dead.'

Not to be outdone, despite Hayes' protests, a confrontation with Signora de Luca was arranged but to the acute embarrassment of

the gathered assembly, he shook his head and said 'I am sorry but you are not the girl I knew', whereupon the woman admitted she had never received any injuries during the battle.

In 1979, on the 35th anniversary of the landing, Chris Hayes returned once again for the inauguration of the statue which had been erected on the road facing the beach as Italy's contribution to the 'Year of the Child' dedicated to Angelita of Anzio.



Left: The battle-scarred gateposts at Isola Bella. Above: Nearby, in the fields where the Rangers were cut down, live rounds lie in the undergrowth.



The film's reconstruction of the landing utilised between four and eight landing craft filmed in daylight using the 'day-for-night' technique to cheat a night effect. Although British troops were seen marching to their embarkation points, none were seen landing on the beach following the bombardment of

a model of the town. The very limited nautical facilities are glaringly apparent and the film fails to provide a convincing illusion of a large task force disembarking. (The original fleet numbered 253 vessels.) Worthy of note is the fact that the foreground GIs are carrying British Lee-Enfield rifles!

THE BATTLE FOR ANZIO

BY WILLIAM B. TRAVIS

The Battle for Anzio — or *Sbarco di Anzio* — shot in 1967 was a partly American financed Italian production given an injection of American and, to a lesser degree, British artists to provide an international appeal. The technical credits proclaimed that the screenplay was based upon the book *Anzio* by Wynford Vaughan-Thomas who had been a BBC war correspondent covering the campaign.

The plot focussed on three elements: (i) the unopposed landing; (ii) the destruction of the American Ranger unit which had got within half a mile of its objective, Cisterna, and on a personal level the adventures of six or seven survivors making their way back to the beach-head; and (iii) the break-out and the capture of Rome. Woven amid these events was an anti-war theme transmitted through the dialogue of battle-weary war correspondent Dick Ennis played by Robert Mitchum. A critic later expressed the opinion: 'It must be a long time since a script managed to pack in so many crassly portentous statements about why men fight wars.' One of Mitchum's biographers described the film as a 'hack movie' and reported that the star demanded script changes in favour of the anti-war element because of his attitude towards the American military involvement in Vietnam.

Following its release in August 1968, the critics' reaction was mixed, mainly tending towards the disparaging. Many complained of the glut of war films being released at that time. One had been compelled to view John Wayne's *The Green Berets* immediately before *The Battle for Anzio*. Another writer pigeon-holed it with yet another 1968 offering, *The Devil's Brigade*, a shallow pyrotechnic romp featuring William Holden and Cliff Robertson. In later years a film reviewer in referring to the director of *The Battle for Anzio*, Edward Dmytryk, called it, 'a disappointing film from a fine craftsman'. This comment is more valid when one remembers

that the same director had made the classic *The Young Lions* with Marlon Brando and Montgomery Clift.

All in all the film falls way down the list in the war film top one hundred, and suffers particularly badly when contrasted with such a success as, say, *The Longest Day*. However, they do both share one thing in common: they each have awful theme songs. The Anzio film has Jack Jones singing 'This World is Yours', whilst the Normandy epic has an effort, named after the title, written by Paul Anka who had been cast in the Ranger unit that

captured the Pointe du Hoc gun emplacements (see *After the Battle* No. 4).

Although the storyline of *The Battle for Anzio* embraced dramatic interpretations of real personalities, notably the Allied and Axis general officers, all the names were changed with the exception of the German commander Generalfeldmarschall Albert Kesselring.

Wolfgang Preiss was cast in this rôle, and he in a sense had taken over where Anton



The film falls down badly on technical details, like this scene depicting Naples. A jeep with a post-war, one-piece windscreen is prominently seen, and the Staghounds are minus their main 37mm armament. Once again the GIs carry .303s!

Even though the credits claim the film is based on Wynford Vaughan-Thomas's book, 'The Battle for Anzio' is an odd mixture of fact and fiction with even the main characters masquerading under different names. Here the commander of the British contingent, General 'Marsh', (Anthony Steel) confers with General 'Carson' (Robert Ryan) on the quayside prior to departure. Behind Marsh is an already harassed Andrew Kennedy — no wonder as General John Lucas has metamorphosed into General 'Jack Lesley'. In reality the British forces were commanded by Major-General Ronald Penney of the 1st Division whilst Robert Ryan's character is a thinly-veiled Mark Clark. Does one assume that Robert Mitchum's war correspondent rôle is modelled on the real life Ernie Pyle?



May 24, 1944 and British infantry and tanks break through the Caesar Line. The vehicle in the foreground and the two others in the mid-ground are examples of the much-exported American-made M47 used to portray King Tigers in the Cinerama-epic 'Battle of the Bulge' (1965). On the hill beyond is another American export (and of late-WWII vintage), the M24 Chaffee. The type has appeared as the M4, Sherman in 'Battle of the Bulge'; as the British Crusader in 'Patton' (1969); but most effectively in its true guise in 'The Bridge at Remagen' (1968) having been supplied by the Austrian Army. There are two brief appearances by an M48 coming off an LCT together with M41 Walker Bulldog light tanks posing as M4 Shermans. In 'The Battle for Anzio' the Allied and Axis armour never meet, which is not surprising as they are played by the same vehicles suitably repainted and covered with camouflage. Not visible in this picture the British tank commanders who go into action wearing steel helmets and with the turret hatches open.

Diffring as the traditional off-the-peg Nazi had left off. Preiss was partly instrumental in introducing a new, less thoroughly objectionable German officer image to British and American films, whereas Diffring had been in the right place at the right time during the

'fifties and early 'sixties when 'nasty-Nazis' had been in demand. It was indeed a brave British PoW who was not intimidated by the pure menace that emanated from Diffring's penetrating icy stare and quietly cruel tones.

With the passing of time some producers

began to make inroads into the cardboard blundering German or evil-Nazi images and began to present the German armed forces in a more dispassionate manner. Darryl F. Zanuck with *The Longest Day*, released in 1962, probably made the initial and most pro-



The only character playing under his real name was Generalfeldmarschall Albert Kesselring in the guise of Wolfgang Preiss who also appeared in 'Von Ryan's Express'. Preiss is seen here as von Rundstedt in 'A Bridge Too Far'.



Locations were equally false. The film-makers choice of a narrow valley for the reconstruction of the ambush of the Rangers is in direct contradiction with reality (see pages 15 and 39). Although the GIs in the foreground (Earl Holliman is on the left while Robert Mitchum is face down on the right) are correctly armed, at least one of the German machine gun teams is seen using a Bren gun. This is also the only scene in the film depicting German armour.

One must give credit where credit is due and General Clark's triumphant entry into Rome is nicely restaged using the original route. The sequence begins on the old Via Appia with the tomb of Cecilia Metella, dating from the first century BC, in the background. It then cuts to the Porta San Sebastiano (the Appian Gate), whereupon the General is filmed passing the Colosseum. Watching the parade, Robert Mitchum is seen standing in front of the Constantine Arch erected in 312 AD after the battle of Saxa Rubra. In this shot the archway can be seen in the background as the armour lines up for filming to commence.

found impact. Employing the balanced cross-cutting technique that Cornelius Ryan had used in his book, Zanuck and his directors gave the Germans a fair crack of the whip — even though history still decreed them to be the losers. It was in this film that Preiss began (along with many fellow German actors) to display the new non-hysterical, non-fanatical Wehrmacht officer. In this production he portrayed Major-General Max Pemsel, the Chief of Staff of the German Seventh Army.

He next appeared in John Frankenheimer's *The Train* in 1965, which centred upon the battle between a maniacally obsessive Paul Scofield, as a German officer determined to transport a hoard of French art treasures to Germany at any cost, and Burt Lancaster, as a French railway worker and partisan committed to thwarting this endeavour with an equal passion. Preiss played a professional Wehrmacht railway officer constantly pitting his wits against the acts of sabotage arrayed against the train and finding expedient methods of overcoming them, whilst Scofield ranted and raved, threatening to shoot everybody, in a manner redolent of the sort of image that Zanuck had spurned.

The cinema's love affair with the cardboard cut-out German officer as seen in *The Dirty Dozen* and *Kelly's heroes* (although the latter as a whole, if taken in the manner in which the director intended, was very funny) was at an end by the time that Preiss was engaged to play Generalfeldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt in Sir Richard Attenborough's *A Bridge Too Far*, released in 1977.

Preiss had portrayed three real historical figures, plus the fictitious officer in *The Train*, and had given humane, measured, believable performances. But he is not perhaps as well recognised or remembered as Anton Diffring. However, Preiss also resorted to stereotype as required by Michael Winner's 1968 war-spoof *Hannibal Brooks*.

Hannibal Brooks apart, Wolfgang Preiss must be looked upon as an actor who has put the Wehrmacht officer (the SS are still



villains) on a par with his Allied counterpart, and his work has gone far to dispel the strutting fanatical image that was a left-over from the post-war years and the influence of propaganda.

Of course, credit for the characterisation of Kesselring in *The Battle for Anzio* does not

belong to the actor alone. That having been said, the portrayal of the part makes not only for an interesting development in the breaking of the mould of the screen stereotype of the 'typical German officer' but is, to my mind, a high point in a film in which others do not exactly abound.



The camera covering the front of General Carson's jeep was cleverly disguised as a newsreel vehicle. Although not apparent at the speed the column passes the marching troops, this still illustrates the penalties of employing local extras (in this instance the Italian Army) that do not entirely comply with the plot's ethnic requirements. Whilst one is aware that there was a considerable immigrant population of Italian extraction in the American Army, the GIs on the left are too 'Latin' for reality.



Left: How it really was when the Fifth Army entered Rome on June 5 and right according to Dino de Laurentiis.



MASSACRE IN ROME

ACT I THE VIA RASELLA

In March 1944 the ancient capital of Rome was awaiting its liberation by the Allies who had already landed in Italy three times during the previous six months. In July 1943, Fascism had been deposed and Mussolini had been arrested only to be later rescued and reinstated by the Nazis. When the new government of King Vittorio Emanuele sued for an armistice, by the time the Italian government decided to accept the unconditional surrender terms offered in return, German forces had taken over the defence of Italy. Nevertheless, Italians hoped that Rome, the Eternal City, would be spared the ravages of war and so, by and large, it was by both the Germans and the Allies. It was a third force, the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale, the CLN, a clandestine amalgamation of anti-Fascist resistance movements, which was, indirectly, to bring the full horrors of war to the people of Rome.

When German forces occupied Rome they agreed to respect an earlier proclamation that Rome would be an 'open city', but since the Anzio landings the number of military movements had tripled, the Swiss correspondent of *The New York Times* reporting that: 'On the Ponte Milvio, which is perpetually clogged throughout the hours of darkness, down the Via Flaminia and the Corso in the heart of Rome proper, the stream pours in unending waves of tanks, motorized artillery and trucks loaded with munitions which filter through the maze of streets to disappear into the Pontine Plains or southward to the escarpments of Cassino. During the daytime, of course, none of this is visible . . . for there is the perpetual danger of American aerial machine gunning along the roads north and south of the capital.'

'Open city' status was never recognised as such by the Allies and, after President Roosevelt declared at a Washington press conference that 'Germany has used the Holy City of Rome as a military center', Allied air attacks were launched against targets on the south and east of the city. Pope Pius XII protested vigorously but his action in turning a blind eye to Hitler's violation of his earlier assurances was to cause a bitter controversy in later years over the partiality of Vatican policy.

Since the landings at Anzio in January, Italian partisans had already engaged in attacking the German forces, their supply routes and depots, although some felt that these pinpricks were hardly the way to win a decisive victory. It was the arrival in Rome of the 3. Bataillon, SS-Polizeiregiment Bozen in February 1944 that gave the partisans the opportunity to mount the operation which was to have such far-reaching repercussions. The regiment, posted under the command of SS-Obergruppenführer Karl Wolff, head of the



Rome 1944. A Panther of the 26th Panzer-Division (2nd Company, 1st Battalion, Panzer-Regiment 26) thunders eastwards along the Via dei Fori Imperiali en route for Anzio. The scene is one full of history. On the right stands the huge Vittorio Emanuele II monument, built on the Piazza Venezia early this century to commemorate the unification of Italy and later the burial place of the Unknown Soldier of the First World War while on the left, behind the gun barrel, lies the site of the Roman Senate which burned down in 52 BC. (Bundesarchiv)



Most troop movements through Rome took place at night — this convoy of assault guns from SS-Sturmgeschütz-Abteilung



16 is making a dash for it along the Via del Tritone and is about to turn down the Via del Corso.

SS in Italy, had arrived to provide an additional force to help keep the people of Rome under strict Fascist control. The 11. Kompanie, comprising 156 men, was assigned to Rome and their regular daily 'show the flag' exercise march through the streets of Rome to the Macao barracks in the Castro Pretorio gave the Roman 'partigiani' the idea of striking directly at the enemy.

Each of the six CLN political parties had military commands theoretically under the jurisdiction of an overall Military Junta although, in reality, operations against the Germans were conducted individually. (Only after Rome was liberated did the CLN fight as a uniformed resistance army in support of the Allies in northern Italy.) The underground movement — the *macchia* — in the centre of Rome came under the Communist-led Gruppi di Azione Patriottica and it was a member of that group, Mario Fiorentini, who had kept watch on the daily march of the SS police. He reported to his commander, Carlo Salinari, code-named 'Spartaco', that when the Germans reached the narrow, steep Via Rasella at around 2.00 p.m. each day, they provided an ideal target. Fiorentini proposed that three partisans could be positioned at the top of the street where they would be able to look down on the approaching column. From there they could hurl grenades at the troops and could easily escape in the confusion. However, although the plan was accepted and mounted early one afternoon in the second week of March, on this very day the march had been suspended and the partisans had to abandon the attempt.

March 23 was an historic date in the Fascist calendar — the day that Mussolini had formed his movement in 1919. Thus 1944 was the 25th anniversary of the creation of the ideology which had even inspired Hitler and so a day-long series of celebrations was planned by the Roman diehards.

The Germans, on the other hand, felt the proposals were inopportune with little popular support by the Italian people at that stage of the war, and they sought to play down what they felt might turn out to be a useless provocation. The views of SS-Standartenführer Eugen Dollmann, Himmler's personal representative in Rome, were that the ceremonies should be curtailed, a view reinforced by his opposite number in the SD (the Sicherheitsdienst or Security Service of the SS, by now indistinguishably merged with the Gestapo), SS-Obersturmbannführer Herbert Kappler. As a result the Italian Fascists were instructed to cancel their plans, save for a church service.

However, having read of the proposed anniversary parades in the Fascist-controlled newspaper, *Il Messaggero*, the partisans were also planning to celebrate March 23 ... although not quite in the same way. To strike a blow on the very day sacred to Fascism would add immeasurably to the propaganda effect and thus plans were laid once again to

attack the 11. Kompanie police column, which had meanwhile resumed its daily march through the Via Rasella.

This time a more effective attempt was to be made to kill as many Germans as possible by the concealment of a bomb in a stolen road-sweeper's handcart which was to be parked two-thirds of the way up the hill, outside the Palazzo Tittoni. A young physicist, Giulio Cortini, and his wife were to prepare the explosives — 12 kilogrammes of TNT in a steel canister, itself surrounded with more TNT packed with pieces of iron tubing to increase the shrapnel effect. The bomb was to be detonated by a fifty-second delay fuse. This timing was established by test runs up the street so that if the fuse was lit as the first Germans reached the Via Boccaccio crossroads, the bomb would detonate as the column was abreast of it.

In all sixteen partisans would be required for the attack, dispersed in the positions indicated on the plan. No. 1, Rosario Bentivegna, would light the fuse on a signal from No. 2, Franco Calamandrei. No. 3, Carla Capponi, Bentivegna's fiancée, was to initially take up a position outside the *Il Messaggero* building on the corner of the Via del Traforo and Via del Tritone. On a signal from No. 4, Pasquale Balsamo, that the Germans were approaching, she would walk ahead, up the Via Rasella to the corner of Quattro Fontane, as a sign to all that it was time to get ready. As soon as the bomb exploded, Partisans 5, 6 and 7 would lob Brixia shells at the rear of the

column, or what was left of it, before escaping southwards down the steps to the Via dei Giardini. Meanwhile Nos. 8, 9, 12 and 13 would converge on the bottom of the Via Rasella to attack any Germans who tried to escape that way. Partisans 10 and 11 would first guard the rear of the men in the Via Boccaccio and then move west down the Via dei Giardini to protect 8, 9, 12 and 13. Bentivegna would be guarded by No. 14, positioned at the gates of the Palazzo Barberini, so that he could look straight down the street. Nos. 15 and 16 would be in the Via due Macelli.

On the morning of the 23rd, a Thursday, as the Fascist chiefs gathered in the church of Santa Maria della Pietà to attend a Mass to honour all those who had lost their lives in the Fascist cause, the partisans were making their own last minute preparations. Their base was at 42 Via Marco Aurelio, just over a mile from the Via Rasella, where the stolen rubbish cart had been stored overnight. Now Cortini installed the device in one of the two dustbin containers while Bentivegna donned a street cleaner's uniform. He planned to light the fuse from his pipe.

With the temperature already in the eighties Bentivegna, escorted at a discreet distance by two of the party, set out on the strenuous journey to push the unwieldy barrow across central Rome. His route followed the Via Claudia, past the Colosseum, and along the Via dell'Impero flanked by the ruins of the Roman Forum. Then across the Piazza Venezia, scene of so many of



Target for the attack: the SS police column during its daily march up the Via Rasella, a narrow street leading off the busy Via del Traforo. This is a still from the 1972 film reconstruction 'Massacre in Rome'. The publicity material produced at the time claims that it was filmed in the actual street but the end building marking the back wall of the film set gives the game away.



Left: The real Via Rasella is situated in central Rome near the fashionable Via Veneto. It is narrow and always crammed with



parked cars. Right: Half way up is the narrow alley where the partisan bomb throwers waited.

Mussolini's public speeches, past the Quirinal Palace to the Via Quattro Fontane (see plan). From here it was not far to the top of the Via Rasella, from where he could drop down to the chosen spot outside the Palazzo Tittoni. Once in position, he wedged the cart against the curb to stop it rolling down the steep hill . . . and waited. It was ten minutes to two.

A few hundred yards away Signorina Capponi had arrived at the *Il Messaggero* building. Unfortunately the two plain clothes bodyguards of the newspaper proprietor were standing outside and they soon became suspicious of the girl hanging about, seemingly with no purpose. Although she managed to 'flirt' her way out of a difficult situation, by 2.20 p.m. the Germans had still not arrived and she knew she would not be able to stall their interest indefinitely. Then Pasquale Balsamo came up unexpectedly and

whispered something she could not catch before hurrying away. Assuming it was the signal for the approach of the Germans, she began her walk to the top of the Via Rasella but almost immediately sensed that Balsamo's hurried departure was nothing to do with the arrival of the Germans. Turning round she saw to her horror that the two bodyguards were following close behind. She kept going but she dare not stop or signal to the waiting partisans that it was a false alarm. Passing her fiancé outside No. 156, by deliberately not looking at him she hoped he would realise something was wrong.

As she paused for breath on reaching the Palazzo Barberini, the men following her came up and asked why she was carrying a man's raincoat. Explaining that it was her boyfriend's, she was saved further questioning when she saw a friend of her mother for-

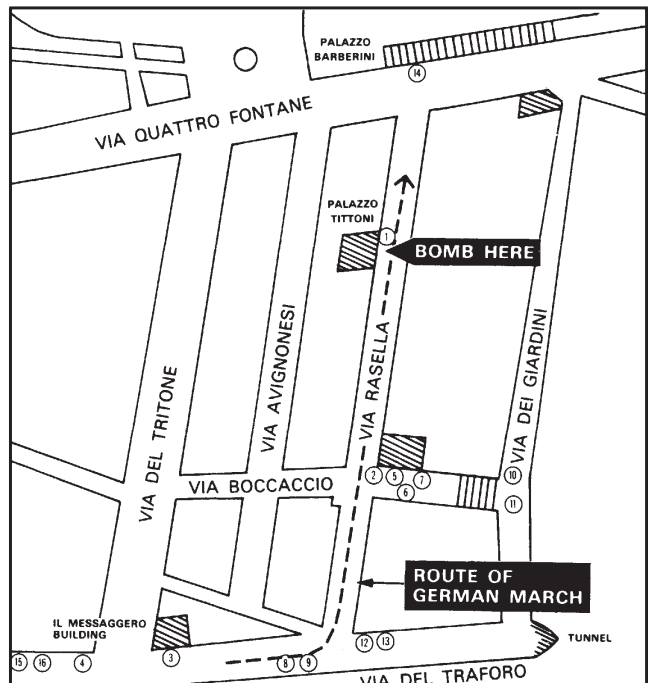
tuitously coming down the street. Rushing up to her, the lady greeted her in true Italian style with a flurry of words with the result that the two men moved some distance away although still watching Carla suspiciously.

By now it was half past three and still the Germans had not arrived. Bentivegna had already lit his pipe three times only to extinguish it when nothing happened; now he was out of tobacco except for odd shreds and pieces of paper which he crumpled into the bowl as a last resort. Convinced that the Germans had abandoned their march and that the operation should be abandoned, he was not looking forward to having to push the cart back across Rome. Five minutes later Balsamo came by with a message that if the Germans failed to appear in the next ten minutes, they would abort the attempt.

Bentivegna was on the point of making a



Some '50 seconds' away up the street is the spot where the barrow was parked on the left outside No. 156, the Palazzo Tittoni, formerly the residence of the pre-Mussolini-era Italian Foreign Minister Tommaso Tittoni. He had died in 1931 although his widow Donna Bice still lived there. Four years after he became Italy's youngest prime minister in 1922, Mussolini lived in a five-room flat in the same building.



Plan reconstructed by author Robert Katz following interviews with the surviving partisans, including Carla Capponi and Rosario Bentivegna, during the research for his book 'Death in Rome' published in 1967. In 1975 a Rome court sentenced Katz to a suspended 14 months imprisonment for defamation of the Pope, having stated in his book that Pius XII knew of the impending massacre yet chose to do nothing.



THE FILM. Quite an accurate reconstruction of the top end of the street, faced by the gates of the Palazzo Barberini.

move when the sound of singing and marching boots heralded the approach of the Germans. He lit his pipe. Now, as the column of 156 men in battle kit escorted by a command vehicle turned into the Via Rasella, the partisans tensed for action. As the SS reached the crossroads, Calamandrei crossed the street in front of them, raising his cap. Seeing the signal, Bentivegna put his pipe to the fuse, placing his own cap on the rubbish cart to signal that everything was in order before walking back up the hill.

At 3.45 p.m., as the police column neared the top of the street, the bomb exploded, the

sound reverberating throughout the centre of Rome. Twenty-six men were killed instantly as the cart disintegrated, sending lethal shards scything through the ranks, wounding another 60, sixteen of them grievously. As soon as they heard and felt the explosion the three partisans sheltering from the blast around the corner in the Via Boccaccio hurled their bombs, one failing to explode. Those Germans still on their feet opened fire indiscriminately, assuming they were under attack from the buildings overlooking the street, and in the confusion all the partisans escaped safely.

THE REALITY. Below: The dead and mutilated bodies are laid out while bottom civilians are lined up in the Via Quattro Fontane in front of the palace gates.



ACT II REPRISALS

That lunchtime the German Commandant in Rome, General Kurt Mälzer, had been dining with SS-Obersturmbannführer Herbert Kappler at the Hotel Excelsior. Mälzer had already drunk too much and the explosion gave him a rude awakening. Arriving at the Via Rasella somewhat the worse for wear, the scene of carnage which greeted him made him livid with rage. Sporadic shooting was still taking place, any movement at a window inviting a fusillade of shots. Mälzer was beside himself with anger, bellowing for every man, woman and child living on the street to be rounded up. As his men began their work Dollmann arrived. 'Everywhere there were large puddles of blood,' he recalled after the war, 'the air was full of groans and cries and shots still rang out . . .' Mälzer came up 'waving like a madman, crying in a voice choked with tears', shrieking for revenge, shouting that he was going to blow up the whole street.

By now some two hundred people had been lined up in front of the gates of the Palazzo Barberini, including Donna Bice from 156. The scene was indescribable, with the road littered with rubble, human remains, pieces of furniture and other household items, and covered in glass, with the water from a broken main cascading through the bloody mess.

When the German Consul, Eitel Möllhausen, drove up with the Fascist Member of the Interior, Guido Buffarini-Guidi, he was stunned by what he saw, Mälzer having 'lost all control of himself' and also still under the influence of alcohol. As engineers prepared boxes of explosives to blow up the street, an argument immediately broke out between the two Germans. Dollmann tried to intervene, as a heated shouting match took place before the assembled company of German and Italian soldiers and civilians.

Meanwhile Kappler had heard the explosions on his return to his office in Gestapo headquarters in the Via Tasso. Summoned urgently by telephone to the scene, he met Möllhausen's car coming the opposite way. The Consul, in a state of excitement, explained what had taken place and what Mälzer was planning. Kappler then proceeded



Houses in the Via Rasella still bear the marks of the indiscriminate firing which broke out from the German survivors. Above: This is No. 17 and left a house on the corner of Via del Boccaccio sprayed with automatic fire. Right: SS-Obersturmbannführer Kappler, seen here in the guise of Richard Burton who portrayed him in the film, takes charge.



to see for himself. When he arrived at the Via Rasella, a scene he later described as a 'terrible picture', he found the General in a lather on the corner of the Via Rasella. Dollmann stood nearby. The Gestapo chief soon sized up the situation and suggested that he should take charge, urging Mälzer to return to his headquarters. The overwrought General conceded and was assisted to his car as Kappler's 3rd SD detachment under SS-Sturmabführer Durante Domizlaff began a thorough house to house search. The civilians, whom Mälzer had ordered must be shot, were turned over temporarily to the Italian authorities.

Around 4.15 p.m. Möllhausen arrived back at the Embassy. He was still in a foul mood and immediately telephoned Generalfeldmarschall Kesselring's headquarters just outside Rome. The Commander-in-Chief of German Forces in Italy was out of his office visiting the front when the call came through but the news of the terrorist attack was immediately relayed on to OKW headquarters at Rastenberg. When Hitler was informed he was furious and within fifteen minutes a call came back from East Prussia with orders to shoot thirty to fifty Italians for every German police officer killed.

Events moved fast. At a meeting in Mälzer's office, the General received instructions from his immediate superior, General Eberhard von Mackensen, commander of the 14. Armee, who thought the Führer's demands excessive and set the ratio at ten Italians for every German. Kappler, who was present, advised von Mackensen that he had already prepared contingency plans for just such an eventuality in that they should choose 'Todeskandidaten', that is, people already held under sentence of death.

Although the order for the executions was still to be confirmed, Kappler immediately set to work drawing up a list of those held in German and Italian jails in Rome, the total German dead now having risen to 28. On his return to his HQ, Kesselring ordered that the executions should take place within twenty-four hours.

It soon became clear to Kappler that he could not possibly make up the total of 280 out of genuine Todeskandidaten and he called his chief, the head of the SD in Italy, SS-General Wilhelm Harster, for advice. Harster advised that the total could easily be met by including as many Jews as needed, and that it was imperative that the list be completed on time.

Kappler worked on throughout the night to make up his total, having sought and obtained permission from the German Military Tribunal in Rome to include people awaiting trial for capital crimes and others already convicted but serving terms of imprisonment. He also called for a list of those civilians rounded up in the Via Rasella to check the names against police files for possible suspects. As the hours passed his task was made increasingly difficult as more of the wounded policemen died — before the night was out it had risen to 32, necessitating an additional 40 names. By 3.00 a.m. he had built up a figure of 270 — 50 short of the total he required. Having exhausted every possibility of those prisoners held under German jurisdiction, he resolved that the

balance would have to be supplied by the Italian police. Early next morning the Italians were told they had until 1.00 p.m. to produce 50 suitable candidates.

ACT III THE EXECUTIONS

When Kappler arrived back in his office on Friday morning he began to plan the second part of the operation — the actual executions. If Hitler's deadline were to be observed, the job would have to be completed that afternoon and a meeting was held to discuss with his men the practical means by which 300-odd people could be killed in the shortest possible time. Having already decided that only SD men of German nationality should carry out the killings, he had available 74 men including himself. As this total was 'much less than the number who had to be shot,' Kappler later described how 'I calculated the number of minutes necessary for the killing of each of the 320. I had the arms and ammunition computed. I figured the total amount of time I had. I divided my men into small platoons, which would function alternately. I ordered that each man fire only one shot. I specified that the bullet enter the victim's brain from the cerebellum, in order that there be no wasted firing and that death be effected instantaneously.'

Then came the problem as to where the executions should take place. Normally the death penalty in Rome was carried out in Forte Bravetta, the victim being tied to a chair

The thirty-three German policemen were buried on the morning of March 25. The ceremony at the Tor di Quinto was attended by Dollman, Kappler and Möllhausen and the recently-arrived head of the SS in Italy, SS-Obergruppenführer Karl Wolff. After the war the bodies were exhumed by the Italian War Graves Commission and reburied in the German War Cemetery at Pomezia between Rome and Anzio.





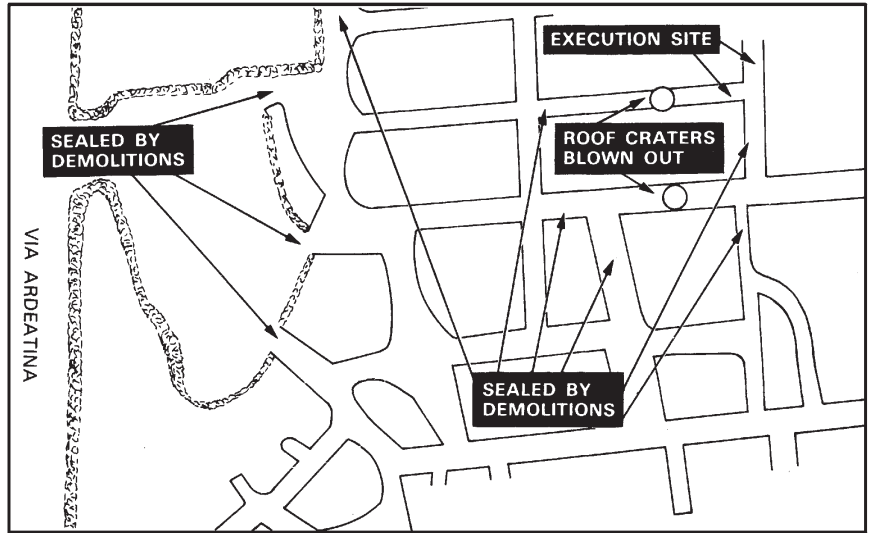
Where the first lorries were loaded: Gestapo HQ on the Via Tasso — now a museum for the liberation of Rome.

according to Italian custom. 'As we did not have time for these formalities,' Kappler coldly explained, 'I thought of creating a kind of large, natural death chamber'. One of his officers said that he was familiar with a network of caves not two miles away beside the Via Ardeatina, near the complex of Christian catacombs of St Callixtus, and Kappler instructed the officer, SS-Hauptsturmführer Köhler, to go immediately to the site to investigate their suitability and also to examine the ways and means of subsequently sealing off the entrances to create a sepulchre.

When Köhler reported back favourably, Kappler decided to personally inspect the site. Just before he left, news came in that a further policeman had died, necessitating another ten people being added to the list, but Kappler quickly solved the problem by including ten Jews who had just been brought in that morning.

A few minutes before two o'clock Kappler and Köhler set out for the caves. As the SD chief left his headquarters his men had already begun shepherding the prisoners held in the Gestapo jail into covered lorries parked in the Via Tasso, the first truckload of Italians departing at precisely 2.00 p.m. escorted by their executioners.

After passing through the Roman wall at



The Ardeatine 'sand pits' were constructed as a result of mining a volcanic dust called pozzolana used for making concrete during the great rebuilding era of the Fascist regime. By 1944 they had been exhausted and were abandoned.

the ancient Appian Gate, the latter-day Porta San Sebastino, the route lay south along what must be the world's most historic road — the old Via Appia. Its construction had begun in 312 BC as one of the 29 great military roads radiating from Rome and, 410 miles long, it joined the Roman towns of Beneventum, Brundisium (now Brindisi) on the Adriatic coast, and Hydruntum. Today the first mile is densely lined with houses and bears little semblance to the ancient 'Way to the Tombs' — the catacombs hewn out of the volcanic rock by the early Christians in which they practised their religion and were buried.

A few hundred yards beyond the railway bridge the road forks. To the left the Via Appia Antica continues south while to the right the Via Ardeatina, another of Imperial Rome's highways, branches off to the port of Ardea. Here, with a grinding of gears, the loaded trucks turned off, but to the prisoners, if they perceived the route or caught a glimpse of the outside world through the canvas, the road ahead only led to the battlefield at Anzio. However those of the Christian faith, who perhaps by now had realised that this was no ordinary ride, would have drawn comfort from this spot, for here, nearly two thousand years before, Peter the Apostle is said to have seen a vision of the Risen Christ: 'Domine

Quo Vadis?' 'Lord whither goest thou?' — the sacred place now marked by the little chapel named after the event.

After a further half-mile the lorries slowed and turned into the open clearing in front of the caves which lay on the right hand side of the road. There were three entrances. Kappler had already chosen the spot where two tunnels intersected (see plan) as the execution chamber and instructed that the victims be escorted there via the central entrance in groups of five, each accompanied by his executioner. Kappler had already given his men a pep talk and demonstrated the method to be used — a single shot in the back of the head of each victim as he knelt. He reminded his men that if any flinched from the task, which had been ordered by the Führer, that man would himself be lined up and shot.

The scene was lit by flashlights held by soldiers lining the tunnel. Even so the light was poor and Major Domizlaff said later that 'one scarcely saw the target against which one had to shoot.' Off to one side stood SS-Hauptsturmführer Erich Priebke with the list of names — it was still short but the killings would have to begin if they were to be completed by 8.00 p.m. when the 24-hour deadline expired. SS-Hauptsturmführer Kurt Schutz stood by to give the order to fire.



'One minute per man'. Kappler thus coldly calculated how long he could afford to spend executing each person.



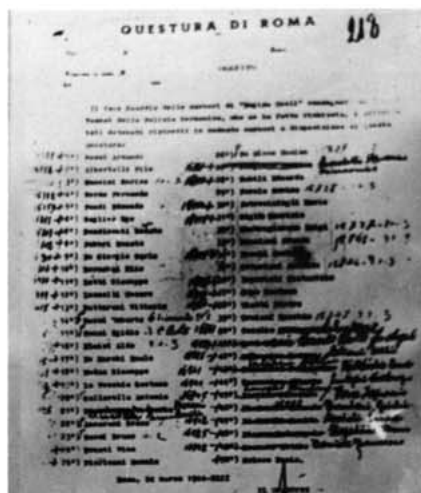
'A location was found in Rome which virtually duplicated the original site', wrote Robert Katz upon our query over the film re-enactment of the massacre, the actual caves now being sacred as a national shrine.

All roads in the vicinity had been sealed off and troops patrolled the ground above the caves to keep away any curious locals. Beneath their feet the first Italians were about to die.

By now it was 3.30 p.m. Other prisoners had already arrived outside the caves brought from the Regina Coeli prison. The first five Germans selected an Italian whose hands were tied behind their backs. After each man had been asked to identify himself, and names ticked off, the five were led to the rear of the central tunnel, forced to their knees and told to face the wall. None protested.

Kappler felt that he and his officers had to set an example to the men and he personally led the next group. 'I went to a nearby truck', he later testified, 'and I took a victim with me, whose name was crossed out by Priebke from his copy of the list. Four other officers did the same. We led the victims to the same place and, in the same way, a little behind the first five, they were shot.'

Leaving his men to continue their grisly task Kappler retired to his office whereupon he despatched more of his staff to take their turn in the execution squads. At the same time he was annoyed to find that the Fascist authorities had still not come up with their share of prisoners to make up the required number. To expedite matters he sent SS-Obersturmführer Tunnat direct to Regina Coeli with orders to get the 50 by 4.30 p.m. at the latest. When the deadline was reached, and with still no list, Tunnat decided to wait no longer. A truck was backed up and the



Germans began taking prisoners at random, driving off with some 30 men. Shortly afterwards the list arrived specifying the detainees by name. Eleven of these did not coincide with those taken by the Germans but arbitrary deletions were made to the list to try to make the numbers tally.

Meanwhile Kappler had received a telephone call from the officer he had left in charge of the executions reporting that one officer, SS-Obersturmführer Wetjen, had refused to take his turn. He decided to deal with the man personally and drove back to the caves. When he arrived he then found that his plans for an orderly operation were already faltering. Some prisoners had resisted and had had to be beaten to their knees, others had been shot singly and bodies were strewn haphazardly for some seventy-five feet down the tunnel and at this rate the corpses would soon extend out into the open. The horror of the massacre was also having a debilitating effect on his men and once again he decided to set an example. With an arm round his waist, he led the mutinous officer into the caves and stood beside him as they both shot two Italians. He then ordered a rest period, passing round a bottle of brandy, advising his men to get drunk.



Today the immaculate forecourt and stone-faced tunnel entrances belie the awful deed committed within.

From now on the victims were made to climb on top of the dead and, as the corpses piled ever higher, so the executioners themselves had to climb on top of the bodies. As night fell the orgy of killing continued, the drunken executioners becoming ever more sloppy in their work, needing more and more shots to kill each victim. The horrific scene defies written description and can hardly even be imagined . . . the flickering torches . . . the distorted shadows of the executioners . . . the muffled shots . . . the acrid pistol fumes mingling with the smell of death . . . the screams and cries of the dying . . .

By 8.00 p.m. it was all over and engineers moved in with boxes of explosives to seal the tunnel. The first two charges were fired that evening, and the following day they returned to complete the sealing of the outer entrances. Believing that all traces of the crime were now eliminated the troops departed and silence at last descended on the Via Ardeatina.

ACT IV THE AFTERMATH

SS-Obersturmbannführer Kappler was not pleased. Only now did he learn that an additional five Italians had been shot, over and above the specified 330, due to the last minute mix up to make up the numbers, and he was

also made aware of the fact that his orders from General Mälzer specified only 320 people; thus the additional ten names he had added at the last moment were technically unauthorised. In their public communiqué announcing reprisals, the Germans avoided any mention of Kappler's double mistake although it was agreed that, if questioned, responsibility for the error must be his alone.

The German engineers had also bungled the demolitions and in two places the explosions had been too powerful, blowing right through the tunnel roof to the surface, leaving the interior open to the outside air. When an awful overpowering stench began to pervade the district Kappler's solution was to dump refuse from the city around the entrances supposedly trying to mask one odour with another!

During the following week priests from the nearby catacombs visited the caves several times seeking a way in but it was not until some boys, scavenging the area for anything of value, came across the hole in the roof swarming with hundreds of bloated flies that one was found. The boys informed the priests and two of their number returned with them and climbed down a ladder into the hole. 'At about six feet from the opening we stumbled upon a pile of corpses', Don Valentini later



The two places where the tunnel roof was penetrated by the German explosions have been grassed over and retained.



recounted. 'Six were plainly visible although they lay face down covered with a thick mould. The tunnel extending behind them was completely filled by cadavers lying in awkward positions.'

The priests immediately informed the authorities at the Vatican; another party came to investigate the discovery the following day, and on Friday, March 31 Don Valentini reported in person to the Holy See. Meanwhile the Germans had learned that the bodies had been found and immediately sent engineers to fill in the hole. Later that afternoon more explosions were heard, the rotting corpses now being effectively buried under piles of sand.

As soon as American forces entered Rome on Sunday, June 4 an immediate call came for an investigation and a commission was set up headed by Dr Attilio Ascarelli, a forensic scientist at the University of Rome. Dr Ascarelli's investigation team entered the tunnels at the beginning of July:

'At the entrance to the caves there were numerous wreaths, and the walls were decorated with writings and relics placed there out of compassion by the people.

'Entering those sombre tunnels, the visitor was overcome with a sense of coldness and, even worse, by an offensive odour, which was difficult to tolerate — a stench that was so nauseating it made one vomit. There was no one who having once entered that place of sadness and martyrdom did not experience an unforgettable sense of horror, of pity for the victims, and of execration for the murderers. . . . The members of the commission were terrified. They inspected the caves, passing through the sloping tunnels by the light of torches, and arrived at the sacred site of the massacre.

' . . . To give an exact idea and a representative description of the appearance of those two piles of human remains is something I do not know how to express in words. The sense of horror and of pity that gripped the visitor is beyond any imagination. Two enormous, shapeless heaps of cadavers, from which arose an unbelievable smell of rotteness, of rancid and decomposed fat. It penetrated and permeated one's clothes to the point that it became necessary to take precautions by wearing special garments, gloves, and boots, and to shield the respiratory tract with gauze masks soaked in deodorant. And even that was not enough.

' . . . Little could be seen of the bodies, but through the mixture of volcanic dust, soil, and the decomposed cadaverous fat that covered the corpses there emerged a foot, here and there a pair of shoes, there a skull, whole or crushed, now a limb, now a piece of tattered clothing. Insects swarmed among the scattered limbs. Myriads of larvae fed on the rotting flesh. Numerous large rats darted from

One hesitates to print such horrifying pictures of the scene confronting Dr Attilio Ascarelli who personally lost two nephews in the massacre. He was a Roman Jew and was determined that the victims of the Ardeatine crime should not be forgotten. His gruesome work to identify the remains was acknowledged by the posthumous award of the Medaglia d'Argento by the President of Italy in March 1964.

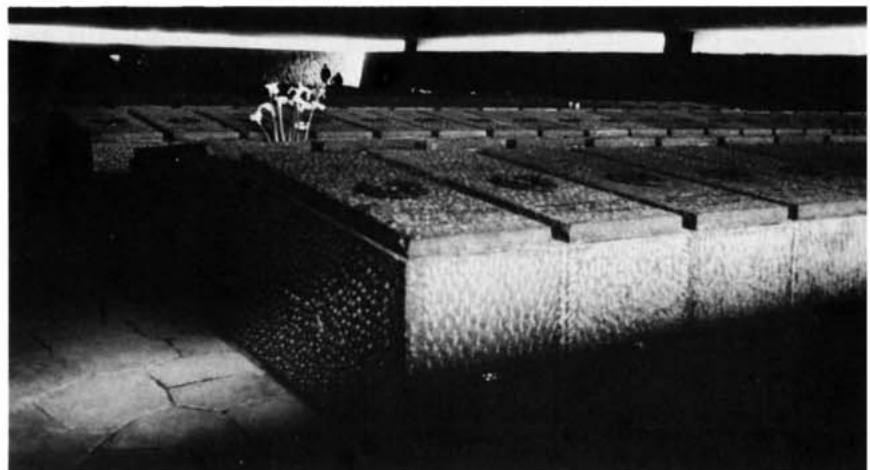
the unburied and unguarded remains, and even from the fragmented heads. . . .'

Families were spared the agonies of visual identification and instead questionnaires listing personal details and personal effects were used by the team which, in the end, succeeded in identifying 322 of the 335 vic-

tims. A huge mausoleum, 50 metres by 25 metres, was constructed nearby with the remains laid to rest in individual named sarcophagi, and on March 24, 1949, the fifth anniversary of the massacre, Le Fosse Ardeatine was commemorated as a national monument.



When first opened as a national memorial, the caskets were simply lined up within the tunnels. Today a huge mausoleum has been constructed outside, lit only by a sepulchral band of sunlight.





Summary justice for the Italian police chief Caruso, executed by a firing squad of carabinieri at Forte Bravetta on the Via Aurelia. (US Army)

Coincidentally with Dr Ascarelli's investigation, a new Italian judicial system installed in Rome by the Allies began its work into 'Fascist crimes'. The first person connected with the atrocity to be put on trial was Pietro Caruso, the Italian police chief of Rome who had prepared the supplementary list of 50 names. His trial on September 20 lasted a single day; the following morning he met his end at Forte Bravetta.

The German participants, or those who could be traced in Allied custody at the end of the war, were taken back for trial in Italy. Generals Mackensen and Mälzer faced a British military tribunal in Rome in November 1946, were found guilty and sentenced to death, later commuted to life imprisonment. Mälzer died in jail while Mackensen was released in 1952.

Albert Kesselring also faced a British military court in February the following year in Venice. He too was sentenced to death but reprieved two months later and sentenced to life imprisonment which was, in turn, reduced to a term of twenty-one years. After having served five years in the British military prison at Wehl, Germany, he was released.

Under the terms of the Moscow Declaration on German Atrocities, war criminals were to be sent 'back to the scene of their crimes to be

judged on the spot by the peoples whom they have outraged', and Herbert Kappler, held by the British, was turned over to the post-war Italian government. His trial, together with co-defendants Hans Clemens, Durante Domizlaff, Johannes Quapp, Kurt Schutz and Karl Wiedner, opened before the Tribunale Militare di Roma on May 3, 1948. During his eight-day testimony Kappler not only argued that he was acting under Hitler's orders, but sought to justify the reprisals as a legitimate act of 'collective repression' in response to the illegal action in the Via Rasella. The verdict when it came graphically demonstrated the inequality liable to occur when defendants accused of the same crime are brought to trial separately by different nations. The Italian court decided that the ten-fold reprisal was perfectly legal and Kappler was found not guilty of murder in the case of 330 of the Italians. But for the mistake of killing the extra people he may well have been acquitted but, as it was, he was found guilty only in respect of the excess five. The other defendants were all found not guilty.

As the code of justice for the new Italian republic renounced the death penalty, Kappler was sentenced to life imprisonment. A series of appeals prolonged the issue until his final plea was turned down by the Supreme

Court in December 1953. Four years later, from his prison cell at Gaeta on the coast between Anzio and Naples, he addressed an appeal to the Italian State for a pardon. It was denied. In 1959, by then a reportedly devout Christian, Kappler sent a request to the Italian President that he might be permitted to visit the shrine at Ardeatine as 'pilgrimage of penitence . . . to render homage'. This too was denied. A year later a further appeal to the highest Italian Military Court for an amnesty was also rejected.

In 1972 he was allowed to marry a West German nurse, Anneliese Wenger, but four years later he had to be transferred from prison to a hospital in Rome suffering from stomach cancer. The following month, March 1976, his wife appealed to President Leone to allow her husband to die at home in Germany and although it was reported that his life sentence had been suspended, it was stated that the German was now too ill to be moved.

Nothing more was heard of Kappler until the morning of Tuesday, August 16, 1977 when headlines around the world screamed of his escape from hospital, aided by his wife who had concealed him in a wardrobe suitcase.

Every Thursday Frau Kappler was in the habit of flying to Rome to visit her sick husband in Celio Military Hospital and on the Monday night had gone to his third-floor private room around 1.00 a.m. Claiming that she had acted completely on her own, she smuggled Kappler from his room, leaving a 'do not disturb before 10 o'clock' notice on the door. By the time the authorities realised what had happened the Bonn Government had received word that Herbert Kappler was now safely in Germany. Reporters immediately descended on the Kappler home in Soltau in northern Germany, where Frau Kappler was reported as saying that she freed her husband 'because in desperation he wanted to take his own life'.

An immediate request was sent from Italy to the German government for his extradition but as Article 16 of the West German constitution prohibits the extradition of any German to a foreign country, the request was denied. As Kappler had become to many Italians the ultimate personification of the evils of Nazism, it was said that a 'hit squad' had already been despatched to Germany to either capture or kill him. Retaliation from pro-Kappler supporters led to bombs being exploded outside the Italian embassy in Paris and the Ardeatine caves themselves.

Six months later the legal impasse was finally laid to rest when Herbert Kappler died of cancer in February 1978.



Kesselring. Brought to book by the British, he was later pardoned and released in 1952.



Mälzer. In the dock at the British military court in Milan in 1946, he subsequently died in prison.



Kappler. Tried in Rome by the Italians in 1947 and sentenced to life imprisonment; rescued by his wife in 1977; died 1978.



ANG LITA DI ANZIO

2 1 1944

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ANNO INTERNAZIONALE DEL FANCIULLINO